

THE
ORPHANS OF SNOWDON.

A NOVEL.



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BY MISS GUNNING.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE
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OUR bountiful Lady of the Lodge detained Brown under her hospitable roof eight days; and never were moments so deliciously passed as those precious ones that were devoted to the overflowings of an honest heart, penetrated with gratitude for their common preserver, and bursting with affection for the fortunate children to whom Heaven had raised up so gracious a protectress.

The morning after Mrs. Osmond's return home, she sent for Brown, Jonathan, War-

ly, and Mrs. Orchard, her housekeeper, to give them a private audience; Lewis and Loretta were confided to the care of other servants, their presence not being required on the discussion of a subject which concerned only themselves.

Brown, very much against the consent of his modesty, which would have prostrated him at the feet of Mrs. Osmond, was forced by her sweet, but positive command, to sit down near her, the family domestics standing round, sharing her benevolent smiles, as, in the course of her directions, she addressed herself to each of them particularly.

“Worthy guardian of our interesting orphans,” said she, (speaking to Brown) “tell me without reserve, without doing violence to the feelings of your own heart, can you live absent from them?—Can you consign them to my care, to my tender care,



care, unreluctantly give up your prior claim to my desire of protecting them?"

"I can, I can, Madam," cried the generous creature, "I can do any thing that is so much for the good of—(he sobbed)—but—(again he sobbed)—never, shall I never, Madam, be allowed to pay my duty to your Ladyship, and see my little ones?"

"Oh, as often as you please, good Mr. Brown; the more frequent your visits to them and to me, the more I shall be your debtor."

"This goodness is what I do not deserve, Madam!—God forgive me for thinking you intended I should never see them any more."

"Rather pray, good soul, that I may be pardoned for having shaped my question in such a form, as to give you cause for those

painful apprehensions ; on the contrary, if you had not a little estate to manage, which must require your attention, I should have invited you to a residence under the same roof with your precious children, whose duty and affections I am willing to share with yourself, though your's must always be the prior title."

This address, so full of condescension, flashed day-light on the benighted spirits of Daddy Brown, whose effusions of joy and gratitude was only to be interrupted by Mrs. Osmond again re-assuming the thread of her discourse after this manner.

"I wish to consult you on my intentions towards these infants, and to know if they meet with your approbation."

"Blessed Lady, spare me this great honour, and do with them what you please! All must be good that comes into your imagination

gination—Heaven will prosper my children, if it be only for your sake.”

“Your kind thoughts of me, my friend, I accept with pleasure; but let me now proceed, for I have yet much to say, both to you and these my good people, whom I shall employ as principals in the system I mean to establish for the benefit of my little wards.”

The bending of knees and bodies testified a chearful obedience to their Lady's commands, of whatever nature they may be; they looked on Brown, and at each other, as if they would all have cried out exultingly on being the servants of so excellent a mistress, had not respect for her presence, and the sound of her voice, confined their sentiments to absolute silence.

“Perhaps,” continued this sensible woman, still speaking to Brown, “the decided

fondness I have shewn towards these little unfortunates may create a supposition that I intend to carry my kindness for them a flight beyond prudence, and by my own folly, in bringing them acquainted with the enticements of vanity, unfit them for the comforts of humble independence. Any state, whether of servitude or business, whatever is purchased by genius or industry, entitles the possessor to call himself independent. I give my servants their wages, they give me their labour, their time, and their faithful attention; thus our obligations are mutual, and neither is dependant on the other.—Were I to chalk out a more opulent path for my orphans than where the comforts of life are attainable by genius and diligence, had I got it in my power to portion them at my death, which I cannot do, or by any other mode to settle them in a state of splendor, instead of doing good I should render evil, by advancing them to stations much more dangerous, and infinitely

nately less happy than what I have chosen for them.—Have I your consent, Mr. Brown, to pursue my own plans?”

“Consent!—Oh, Madam—my—my—my consent!”—Joy choaked his further utterance, and tears ran down his cheeks to supply the want of speech.

“I am fully satisfied with these testimonials of your approbation,” continued she, “and now, Jonathan, as the oldest of all my respectable servants, I call upon you to declare, without fear of giving the smallest offence, by answering truly to my question, whether you think, at your advanced time, any new imposition on your domestic duties would make you uncomfortable?”

“Madam,” cried the grateful old man, “rather command my life than my services; though, God be praised, your faithful servant is so little the worse for wear, as

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to be able for the undertaking twice as much as he has to do in the family of his excellent and kindly confiderate lady."

"Well, then, my good Jonathan, to your care I shall confign the charge of instructing my pretty infants in the useful management of their pen and a perfect knowledge of arithmetic."

"I shall do it, Madam, not as an addition to my labours, but as an honour and pleasure, which would more than reward them were their numbers twice doubled."

"Thank you, thank you, Jonathan, for your chearful acquiescence.—And you, Warly, whose partiality for the orphans is of as long standing as my own, will think it no trouble, as they read tolerably well already, to teach them a better accent, and also to instruct Loretta in all sorts of needlework that can be useful or ornamental.

Had

Had I taken it into my head to become a romantic instead of useful friend to these little people, I could no where have found for them governor or governess better skilled for the office, none with whom their minds, their tempers, and their morals, will be still more attended to than their outward adornments. They are inclined to acquit themselves of their religious duties, and it shall be my particular province to enlarge their understanding concerning the greatness and goodness of God."

The prelude of a smiling curtsy signified Warley's intentions of making her willing responses; but Mrs. Osmond, who felt fatigued with the exertion of so much speaking, and wishing to dismiss the assembly, she told her with a gracious nod, that she need not signify her readiness to become the instructress of Loretta, it being marked on her countenance.

After a moment's pause—"And now, Orchard, comes your turn, provided you are willing to accept an office in my children's domestic establishment."

"Certainly, Madam, with my whole heart, and the very best of my abilities."

"Every one being alike entitled to my thanks, divide them amongst you. Know, that as I do not intend Loretta for a fine lady, but a notable woman, like yourself, I desire she might receive from you her lessons in all culinary or confectionary matters; for which purpose, she shall attend in your room two hours every morning, and I hope it will not be long before I am gratified by seeing a desert on my table all of your little helpmate's arranging."

This plan, so wise, so prudent, for the future welfare of Montgomery's children,
was

was also equally calculated for their present felicity. New favourites are seldom well received by old servants, especially when unlimited indulgence threatens that they may grow into masters and mistresses of a domineering description ; but here the line of separation between their own condition and that which the benevolent Mrs. Osmond destined for the little ones of her charity being almost imperceptible, in placing them below the contemplation of jealousy, she procured them a station in the very hearts of those to whom was confided their personal care and mental acquisitions.

During eight days that the good Daddy Brown was a welcome guest at Osmond Lodge, its revered mistress seldom treated herself with the company of her recent purchase ; she had them brought to her bedside of a morning, called for them to attend her toilet at noon, and in the even-

ing saw them kneeling between Brown and Warly at the family devotional assemblage, but contented herself at other times with short interviews; for as, with propriety, she could not admit Daddy Brown in form to her table, or to her uninterrupted society, much less would she curtail him of the still sweeter society of his beloved and loving little ones; yet in this distance, prescribed by decorum, pride and restraint had no share, often did she look in upon them in the housekeeper's apartment, sometimes joined them in the garden, and walking by the side of Brown, condescend to enter into the most familiar conversations, of which the children, or his affairs, was always the subject.

She feared the possibility of a disappointment to his hopes, on learning from his own simple relation, that he had no other summons to take possession of his little Cornish estate, except from an advertisement

ment in the public papers. To foresee an evil was with her to look for a remedy, so that whilst, by her order, the village taylor was preparing a handsome suit of broad cloth, and Warly employing not only her own fingers, but all the females in the house, in providing linen, whilst these outward trappings of respectability were getting ready, Mrs. Osmond dispatched her own lawyer, the distance being only twenty miles, to certify himself of Brown's right to the succession; when every thing turning out to her wishes, and the honest claimant's entire satisfaction, she suffered him to depart on one of her horses, with a groom to attend him, that his appearance, on the dawn of fortune, might inspire his neighbours with that opinion of equality, which of all others is the most necessary ingredient to good fellowship. At her particular request, he took no leave of the orphans, whom he was at liberty to visit as soon and as often as he pleased. No such restriction

restriction being laid on his farewells to any other part of the household, they were extremely kind to all, but extremely tender to Mrs. Warly in particular, who could not help mingling her tears with those of Lewis and Loretta, when she told them on the same morning that Daddy Brown was gone !—Yet she did not present either herself or them before her Lady until all traces of sorrow were wiped away.

About this time Mrs. Osmond had the pleasure of hearing that her daughter and grand-daughter were arrived at their town residence, in health and safety. Lady Acres, being far removed from the character belonging to a dissipated woman of fashion, did not excuse the shortness of her letter, by pleading a run of company, unavoidable engagements, balls, assemblies, or losses at play ; she only accounted for it by complaining that, during her absence, the careless, good for nothing servants, from want
of

of economy, had involved her in so much trouble, with settling and paying off their accounts, discharging the heedless creatures, and replacing with others, that she had hardly a moment to bestow even on Sir John and Harriet, nor should she open her doors for the reception of visitors until she had made herself more comfortable.

Quære—Can a turbulent disposition ever make itself comfortable?—Certainly not. Quiet is the foundation of comfort, and Lady Acres, never remarkable for being long pleased with any body, could not be long pleased with herself, of course was unacquainted with the luxury of that internal peace enjoyed by Mrs. Osmond, which the crash of worlds would not have untranquillized.

After mentioning the letter, we must not omit the postscript, which is generally allowed

lowed to contain the best part of a female epistle.—“ I want to know vastly, dear mamma (says she) what you mean to do with the little, dirty beggar children you picked up on Mendip Hills?—I am sure they must be a monstrous expence, and a great burden to you. Sir John, who belongs to several charitable institutions, may get them provided for at one or another of these receptacles. If you approve that he should do so, he will set about it directly. Harriet sends her duty, and hopes her dearest grand-mamma will never love any little brats so well as she does her.”

“ Poor dear !” cried the placid parent, speaking to herself, as she put up her daughter’s letter, “ thou art all prudence, all propriety, in thy conduct as a wife and a mother, why then so *much* the enemy of thy own *real* happiness, as continually to disturb it by such *imaginary* evils !”

Loretta,

Loretta, already possessed of as many friends as there were servants in the family, through her interest with the gardener, having obtained a nosegay almost as tall as herself, had conveyed it to the apartment of her benefactress, who, being in the act of reading, did not observe either the sweet child, or her little bundle of sweets, until first giving vent to her thoughts in the sort of soliloquy we have repeated, she turned, and saw her standing at her elbow, mute and attentive.

“How long have you been here, my love?” asked Mrs. Osmond.

“Only a little while, Madam—See what fine flowers I have brought; but you cannot wear them all in your bosom, so I must lay them down at your feet to smell at.”

“But suppose I tread upon and spoil them?”

“That

“That will be no pity at all; for then, Madam, I shall run out and get you more.”

“No, you shall not do so, Loretta; I will take this rose for *your* sake, and give it a place in my bosom, the rest I would have you carry to Warly, and bid her set them out in my dressing-room.”

“May I give Mrs. Warly and Mrs. Orchard, a rose too?—See, Madam, how many there are. Shall I, Madam, ask them to have one a-piece, for they are very good to me and Lewis?”

Go, my charmer—go and do whatever thy grateful little heart shall dictate.—

Who,” continued the good Lady, as Loretta, seizing on the permission so kindly granted, disappeared, “who shall call such children as these a trouble or a burden?—

Who is it that would persuade me they are
objects

objects fitted for the bounty of common charity?—Oh, that so hard a sentence had not come from the pen of my daughter!—It never could have originated in her heart—Her judgment *may*, but God forbid her heart *should* mislead her!—She saw them, she must have admired them, and hereafter she will love them.

On the groom's return from escorting Daddy Brown to the place of his nativity, all the domestics gathered about him to ask questions; Loretta and Lewis would probably have been of the number, but they were already in bed. Mrs. Osmond, being informed that he was come back with his horses in the best possible condition, sent for him into her presence, and learnt from his answers to her enquiries, that the worthy man was most cordially received by many old acquaintances, and with hearty good-will by the rest of his neighbours; that besides a hundred acres of land, within
a ring

a ring fence, he had a pretty cottage, neatly furnished, with some stock on his ground, a pleasant garden, and fuel enough to last the whole winter ?

“ Did he seem much surprized,” asked Mrs. Osmond, “ at finding every thing so comfortable ? ”

“ No, my Lady, he said it was all your Ladyship’s goodness, or he should have come to bare walls, and then he wept bitterly.”

The surmise of Daddy Brown was no less natural than true, Mrs. Osmond having desired the lawyer whom she dispatched before him, to leave behind him a commission, that every thing should be put into the house, necessary to the immediate accommodation of its new owner, at her own expence ; and before a month had elapsed, the grateful object of her bounty came

came to acknowledge at her feet the greatness of his obligation. Afterwards his visits were on the same day of the month regularly repeated, much to the joy of himself, Lewis, and Loretta, to the satisfaction of their best friend, and with something more than joy or satisfaction to the tender-hearted Warly. In short, his appearance always made a holiday at the Lodge, whilst his departure from it on the second morning was rendered more easy, by knowing the very day, almost the very hour, when they should see him again; and Mrs. Warly, who was not unacquainted with the Poets, would exclaim, as she stood at the door to look after him, as far as her sight extended, "The joys of meeting pay the pangs of parting, else who could bear it."

It would be in vain to deny that Mrs. Warly *thought* of Daddy Brown, and that Daddy Brown *thought* of Mrs. Warly, when the secret had been discovered by the whole

whole family ; it had not even escaped the discernment of Mrs. Osmond, though she closed it up in her mind, until able to decide whether she should be most sorry to part with so faithful an attendant, or glad to see her, the wife of an honest man, with whom she could live in decent independence, and at his death, if she happened to be the survivor, run no risk of being left unprovided for.

When Mrs. Osmond sat down to answer the letter she had received from Lady Acres, on reading it over again, she felt her displeasure at the harshness of her language, applied to her little *protégées* increase, in proportion to the increase of her own affections for them. At first she resolved not even to mention them, and actually finished two pages without naming them, but so near had they nestled to her heart, so interwoven themselves with all her ideas, that in spite of former resolutions,

tions, she filled the other two pages with nothing but the restricted subject. She coolly thanked her Ladyship and Sir John, for their obliging offers of establishing her foundlings in one of the public receptacles, but should decline giving them so much trouble, hoping, under her own eye, she might, by bestowing on the good children a useful education, make them valuable members of society; condescending to draw up a short sketch of her plans in their favour, such as we have before represented them, with an addition or two, which must be explained in her own words. Thus, my dear, you may perceive, that in providing for these hapless orphans, my intentions are neither romantic nor extravagant. I have lately, indeed, on discovering their uncommon natural endowments, a little altered my first views for them, without flying beyond the regions of common sense.

You

You know there is a small living in my gift, it may be in your's, should the present incumbent outlive me, but whether mine or your's, that I know would be exactly the same thing. Two hundred pounds a year is not enough to awaken ambition, yet sufficient to reward merit, and Lewis will at least have that to recommend him.

This living then is all that I wish him to possess from my family, but should his future deservings obtain for him the mitre and lawn sleeves, perhaps I shall be still better pleased. But you may object to the expence of a learned education; I would by no means give you or Sir John Acres just cause to think me a squanderer, for, though by my situation, I am not accountable to any, yet affection will ever make me so to my children, and to them I shall explain, that if a pecuniary inconvenience occurs, it can fall only on her who eventually will be the most benefited. At present

sent my little ones are no incumbrance, they are fed with as much ease as my poultry, and taught with as little expence as my Canary birds; but when I find their educations require more than I can spare, without prejudice to my charitable fund, I will part with as many of my coach, saddle horses, and other unuseful luxuries, as shall amply supply the deficiency. This retrenchment can be felt by none but myself, and I shall only feel it an acquisition to my happiness.

Thus have I told you my views for the boy; he is by birth a gentleman, it would be hard, therefore, to deprive him of a gentlemanly profession.

For Loretta they are more humble; I shall make her a notable, afterwards a polished woman, that she may be equally fitted to credit the appointments of governess or housekeeper, perhaps, my dear, in your

own family, or in any other to which, for my sake, you may hereafter have the goodness to recommend her.

Pray say to my sweet Harriet, my beloved grand-daughter, I am so well persuaded of her kind sympathy towards all distressed objects, particularly the distressed of children like herself, who can have no friend but such as God Almighty sends them, that I consider her little pettish request as a jest upon herself; but tell her also, that it does not act as a jest on the feelings of her grandmother, who, even in sport, is hurt at the idea of ever giving her a rival in those affections, in which she is as much from her excellent heart, as from the claims of nature for ever established. I should not love her half so well, were she *seriously* to conceive any jealousy for the little folks I have taken under my protection, or grudge them that portion of regard, ever to be disseminated from the offices

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fices of compassion, and without which, benefits would appear insults; for when kindness assumes any form but her own, she brings no healing on her wings, she may be forced by necessity on our acceptance, but we do not give her a welcome.

This sensible appeal to her grand-daughter, was by Mrs. Osmond intended for Lady Acres herself, whom she well knew was the inditer as well as the writer of that narrow caution, she had placed to the account of Harriet, a child so meek, so affectionate, so amiable, so like in all respects to her grandmother, that where any appearance militated against the goodness of her heart, no subterfuge could be close enough to cover the deceit.

Mrs. Osmond, in the bosom of her family, or dispensing favour round her neighbourhood, should be compared to a beautiful tree, far excelling in fruit and useful-

ness, all other towering trees of the forest. Its trunk might be called the support of the feeble and friendless, against the strength of which, adversity blows her chilling blast in vain; its branches bearing consolation, and every leaf a virtue.

Let us next try to find some similitude, equally applicable to the Orphans of Snowdon. I think we may liken them to gems of high value, which, as long as hid in the quarry, attract no attention; but when brought to light, and polished by the soft hand of benevolence, become the splendid ornaments of a great world.

Lewis and Loretta were certainly those gems, and perhaps the most beautiful of the whole species. Whoever had seen them whilst travelling in the train of Daddy Brown, would never have known them again, after they had been two years under

under the protection of Mrs. Osmond, and the tuition of her well-informed servants.

Whether stunted in their growth by hard fare, or blighted by the chilling blast which blew upon them from the bleak mountains of Snowdon, or to whatever cause their diminutive figures may be attributed, there remained no traces by which the tardiness or the inflictions of Nature could have been discovered. The person of Lewis was now as remarkable for its shoots, as before it had been for the backwardness of its progress; and that of Loretta, moulded by the hands of the graces, rolled out to meet the standard of perfection.

The growth of their improvements kept pace with that of their forms; they lost none of their endearing simplicity, but they acquired a great deal of easy politeness, to the abundant stock they before possessed of native civility. Peace reigned in their bo-

soms, joy sparkled in their eyes, health spread her roses over their cheeks, gratitude animated their features, love, duty, and reverence for their protectress, directed their actions and governed their motions.

Their affection for Daddy Brown, continued as lively and as fervent as ever, but in the expression of it, Lewis was more manly, and Loretta less childish; the former would give him his hand with a hearty dash; the latter, press his dark hand between her own white ones, whether in the presence or absence of Mrs. Osmond, it was all the same thing, her innocent fondness was unconstrained, but she no longer hung about his neck, or reposed her beautiful face on his bosom. She had learnt from the most perfect of her sex, lessons of delicacy never to be forgotten.

The

The consistency of their conduct in every point of view, drew on them the respect, as the humility of their deportment, and the sweetness of their tempers, entitled them to the good will of every servant in the family. Those to whom their education was consigned, performed their several duties with as much honest pride, as if they had been their Lady's children, and with as much fondness, as if they had been their own.

Jonathan, when examined by his mistress on the improvement of his pupil, by the length and warmth of his praises, would seem to forget that he was not entertaining a partial mother, who, as long as he held forth on the sense, the spirit, the capacity of her darling son, could think him neither impertinent nor tedious, nor was he considered as either by Mrs. Osmond.

Loretta too, was not without her trumpeters, whatever little work she put out of hand, whether plain or fancy, was immediately carried to her Lady by Mrs. Warly, with more glee, than if she had done it herself, *Jonathan like*, every exhibition had its encomiums of no common length, and generally ended by both with these words—Sure, my Lady, there never was such another boy as Lewis! Or, did you ever see, my Lady, such a prodigy as Loretta?

These general favourites always sitting at table with their Mistresses, they would not have spoken of them in her presence, by the familiar names of Lewis and Loretta, if it had not been at her own wise command, that *Master* and *Miss* were abolished from their vocabulary.

If Mrs. Osmond said to her Housekeeper at any time, Orchard, such tarts or such
jellies

jellies were remarkably well done, or the desert you gave me to-day, was set out with great elegance; she would as surely reply—"Yes, my Lady, but the praise belongs to Loretta; she learns every thing faster than I can teach—God bless her delicate little fingers. I only fear, Madam, that her diligence will leave me nothing to do, or that what I can do, will appear as nothing in comparison with her performances."

Such declarations were always well received by Mrs. Osmond, who never failed to reward her good people with a smile of approbation, which, though often bestowed, lost nothing of its value, although rated far above the contents of a wardrobe, or even gold itself.

Such are the exclusive riches of virtue, which pays in its own coin, and whose bank is never exhausted.

C 5

My

My dear young readers, judging by the interest I have formerly taken in the dog of dogs, the incomparable Lion, I can be at no loss to guess what must be your impatience, to be told the portion of happiness which fell to his lot where *all* were happy.

Could he have spoken, no doubt he would tell you himself, the enviableness of his situation. I can only surmise what must be his perfect satisfaction, by his faithful adherence, as well to his new friends, as his old companions. He walks into Mrs. Osmond's dressing-room or eating-parlour, with as much familiarity, as if at home; sleeps with Jonathan, is fed by every servant in the house, and though not admitted to the society of his beloved play-fellows at lesson hours, he makes up for the short banishment, by waiting for them at the school-room door, and afterwards joining

ing in their walk, often accompanied by Mrs. Osmond.

On such occasions, he best exemplifies his entire content and most grateful propensities. He jumps—he dances—runs backwards and forwards—turns quick and lightly round them—fixes his eyes on them full of fondness—draws near to their protectress, licks her hands, and looks his thankfulness—then disappearing, returns bringing a stone in his mouth, or dragging something after him ; it may be called the play of joy and of gratitude, the only modes by which he is able to express his sense of their kindnesses, and of his own felicity.

How many examples may we apply to ourselves amongst those animals, created by the Almighty Deity for our support, for our pleasure, and perhaps for our instruction. From the lamb we may learn meekness; from the ass patience; from the ox

mild submission ; from the horse activity, and aptness to receive instruction ; and dogs teach us, that fidelity is the soul of friendship.

Lady Acres, whatever might have been her *real* opinion, pretended entire coincidence with Mrs. Osmond's charitable designs for the establishment of her Orphans, and even condescended once or twice a year, to name them in her letters.

It was not till three summers after the children's residence at the lodge, that Sir John, his wife, and daughter came down to visit their respectable parent, as was their custom on the return of every third spring ; the day, almost the hour of arrival and departure, being prefixed to the 29th of April, and the 29th of October, from which Lady Acres would not have deviated, had any thing less than mortality itself, or its immediate approach, stood in the way of her

her punctuality, her Ladyship being always precise to the very extent of precision.

These triennial visitations, were to Lewis and Loretta a just epitome of human life; now strewed with flowers, now covered with thorns; now brightened by sunshine, now overclouded with storms.

The affectionate condescensions by which Harriet courted their friendship, warmed the unassuming hearts of Montgomery's children; but the haughty distance with which they were treated by her mother, chilled in the bud their innocent enjoyments.

Sir John, who was a good-natured man, admired the Orphans, and loved them the better for being the favourites of his daughter; when little, he would join in their plays, throw himself down on the grass, and

and let them gambol about him, as if the common father of all; and as Lewis and Loretta advanced in stature, as in elegance and beauty, after another three years separation, he would have taken the whole charge of them entirely on himself, engaged Loretta as the companion of Harriet, and sent Lewis to the academy at Woolwich; but both these liberal offers were decidedly rejected by Mrs. Osmond, because she plainly saw they were not relished by her daughter, neither was this her only objection; she did not intend Lewis for a military profession, but for the church, and at the age of twelve, she had given him an instructor in the dead languages, as well as the *Belles Lettres*, in which he made the most astonishing progress, under the direction of the worthy and learned Rector of her own parish, as soon as he came from the hands of Jonathan, who declared with no little exultation to his satisfied Lady,

that

that Lewis wrote well enough for a secretary of state, and was accountant enough for the office of first clerk to the Bank.

Loretta, the enchanting, the accomplished, the tender Loretta, could she consent to have parted with that amiable child, who lived but to study her ease, and enliven her solitude—could she, on any terms, have resigned her to another? No: had Lady Acres been as fond of taking her to town, as she was of leaving her behind, Mrs. Osmond could not, would not have parted with her. She loved her granddaughter as well as she loved the Orphans of Snowdon, but she loved her no better. She would have lived with them all, had that been possible—to part with all, was impossible.

Sir John was forced to accept her excuses, and Lady Acres was more than delighted with them—observing, that although

though Loretta might be very good, and a very pleasant companion for her dear mother, who chose to bury herself in the country, yet she must say, the child was much too young and too delicate, to be useful in *her* family.

Mrs. Osmond stopped her further objections, by saying with a smile, composed of good-humoured reproof—"My dear Lady Acres, where did you acquire these notable notions, that you are never to have any thing about you but what you call useful? Is not a little mixture of the agreeable to be preferred?"

"Oh no! Companions and ladies maids are odious, if they want to be agreeable! I wish, Mamma, you would have Loretta taught by a fashionable milliner to make caps, trimmings, and fancy dresses, it will save me a considerable expence when Harriet goes into the world."

Mrs.

Mrs. Osmond looked grave, and proposed a walk in the garden.

“ Having called Loretta accomplished, I shall be thought ignorant of the difference between ancient and modern accomplishments, a perfect antediluvian body, who supposes they consist in all the art of housewifery, such as were possessed in old times by old women, notable women, and good women of every description, from Queens and Princesses, who for pastime made cakes, cordials, and confectionary in their private closets, down to the humble dames of the laborious yeomanry, whose hands were never better employed than in baking, brewing, sewing with their needles, and nursing their children.”

“ These are the recorded accomplishments of our predecessors ; and, however opposite to those of the present age, when united together, as they were in the innocent Loretta,

retta, form one of the most exalted characters which any female can aspire to, that of knowing how to govern domestic affairs in her closet, and ornament a drawing-room by the brilliancy of her mental endowments."

"But how, you will ask, was the little Loretta to acquire any other improvements, except such useful ones as Mrs. Warly and Mrs. Orchard were equal to inculcate, and, of course, confined to what may be denominated the mysteries of ancient education?"

"Your question is founded on reason, and it must appear extremely strange, were I not able to account for the seeming inconsistency, that the *protégée* of Mrs. Osmond should, notwithstanding the fond partiality of that good Lady, in such a retired corner of the globe, pick up any knowledge in the polite arts, without the possession

possession of which no woman can shine beyond her own contracted circle, and which are only considered attainable under French governesses, and in London seminaries; but as Loretta really did possess them many degrees above mediocrity, I shall proceed to tell you by what very natural means these contradictions are to be reconciled."

"To do this it will be necessary that I should bestow a few pages on the subject of Mrs. Osmond's system, in forming the minds as well as the manners of those children Providence had entrusted to her care; and her first object was to make them look up with awful gratitude to that Omnipresence, which, unseen, had guided, protected, provided for them—and not only for them, but for every part of his beautiful creation, animate or inanimate.

Not

Not to acknowledge the hand of God (would she say) in any but extraordinary mercies, such as you my children have personally experienced, would not be less arrogant and presumptuous than ignorant and selfish. Every moment He permits us to live, every object He permits us to behold, in the ordinary course of nature, is fraught with wonders; that we live is as great a miracle, as that through the mediation of a Saviour we shall be raised up at the last day."

"By means of a microscope she would make them observe, that the smallest, almost imperceptible animalcule, had life, motion, a distinct form, eyes, mouth, and feet; and thus would she reason with her delighted pupils: "In the least of these insects see, and adore the infinite power and wisdom of their as well as our Creator, who for the minutest of his works provides as
liberally

liberally as for the immense whale or stately elephant!—Let us try to imitate the example of this all-gracious Deity. Let all the creatures of God's bounty feel our benevolence. Let us never wantonly destroy, or render painful that existence which it has pleased our common Author to give, and which he vouchsafes to preserve, by providing for their wants."

Whether in the garden or the field, her lectures were always the same, however the subject of praise may be varied. "Observe," she would say, in passing through a field of ripe corn, "observe the richness of this scene!—Can you look on it with insensibility, and not think of that God whose merciful hands cover the earth with abundance? But what shall be said for such heedless creatures as, like brutes, masticate the food set before them, without lifting up their hearts to him who gives it?"

In

In such sort of instructions one day succeeded to another, the last always the most delightful to the Orphans of Snowdon, who never repined at retiring early, yet regretted the necessity of going from the presence of their beloved monitress. As they went soon to bed, so they got up soon in the morning; for when Mrs. Osmond kissed and wished them a good night, it was common for her to give them a short charge, always to the same tendency, though not in the same words.—“ *Use* sleep, my loves, but do not abuse it; court rest as the friend of exercise, not as the promoter of sloth and idleness.”

On this first, best foundation was raised the beautiful superstructures, so highly, so ornamentally compleated.

Mrs. Osmond cheated herself into the fallacious opinion of having varied very little

little from her original plan for Loretta's education, by following the lead to which her natural genius pointed; but that genius was so rapacious, that it pointed at every thing; yet the friend of its rapacity, whilst indulgently conducting it along, said sometimes mentally, sometimes to Warly, Loretta's understanding such or such an accomplishment, is nothing more than giving her a small addition to the stock on which hereafter she must depend for support.

These were what she mistook for her real thoughts; but perhaps, nay, it is certain, that a little spark of ambition had concealed itself under shelter of a hope, that the exquisite beauty and amiable qualities of her favourite might one day or other make her the mistress of, instead of the dependant on, some family of distinction; she would possibly have tried to extinguish

tinguish this spark, but it warmed her bosom so gently, that it was almost imperceptible to herself.

Mrs. Osmond, when transplanted from the Court to the country, brought with her not only her own virtues uncontaminated, but even more than her share of courtly elegancies, only leaving behind her undivided its vices and its follies. Music, painting, and drawing, succeeded, in her preference, after the domestic duties of wife and mother, and the very next to the still sublimer study of Nature.

Near neighbours she had none, but at the distance of a few miles many, whom she cultivated, and by whom she was equally respected and beloved, being at once the woman of honour, refinement, brilliancy of parts, kind, condescending, and affectionate.

Without

Without proposing herself as a pattern, she would have formed the mind of an only daughter after the model of her own ; but Nature refusing to give her the same good materials, the work miscarried, insomuch, that when she drove from the Lodge as the wife of Sir John Acres, she could only weep the departure of a beloved daughter, without feeling any loss that she had sustained in a companion. Not so mild was her fate, when, at the end of another year, the fond partner of her joys, the ever beloved, ever elegant husband of her choice, was suddenly snatched from her embraces !—It was *then*, though she patiently submitted to the mandate of Heaven ; it was then that she felt a breach in her domestic comforts, which no other society was able to repair.

Instead of indulging her sorrows, she did all in her power to subdue them, but the victory of sense over sensibility is not easily obtained, and it was many months before

she was sufficiently tranquillized to resume those innocent pursuits which used to afford her so much pleasure.

Lady Acres, at the decease of her father, had become a mother, and brought down her infant to Osmond Lodge as soon as she could travel with safety. Nature had given her no feelings, except for her own authority, her own precision, or her own interest; but when her commands were disputed, her exactness ridiculed, or her property invaded, nobody would deny but that she possessed even more than a common proportion of energy.

Mrs. Osmond, as with streaming eyes she embraced her daughter, speechless with emotion, saw none of her real sorrow reflected on the screwed-up features of Lady Acres, yet her grief was extremely decent, and moderately seasoned with tears; her visit continued many months; her company consoled,

consoled, but her conversation did not very much amuse her widowed mother, consisting chiefly of her servants' faults, her husband's frailties, her own disorders, and her own notabilities.

Sometimes finding her pensive mind disturbed by more than enough of such domestic topics, Mrs. Osmond would softly touch the keys of her harpsichord, sometimes take up her pencil, sketch the outlines of a drawing, or throwing a rose on the table, so skilfully turn imitator, that Nature, jealous of being outdone, called all the powers of sensibility to her aid, which dissolving itself into a fluid, fell on the half-finished flower, and blotted out its pre-eminence.

Frequent returns to these mental amusements, however, forced on her choice by necessity, were salutary in their effects; every new effort brought with it new

strength of execution. The concord of sweet sounds, touching to every ear, in a short time became perceptible to her own, from whence the violence of sorrow had excluded them; the landscape, sketched without reflection, was filled up with correctness; and the delicate flower of her execution was now unfulfilled by the tear of retrospection.

This re-attachment to her former studies, which ever after increased rather than diminished, was extremely advantageous to the education of our Snowdon Orphans, for in these branches she began from the very first rudiments, till she had conducted them to that eminence of execution by which her own talents were distinguished in the schools of painting and music; she gave them a master for dancing—the graces were all her own, and she freely conveyed them to the children of her bounty.

“ I hurt

"I hurt not my heirs," would she say, "because the few talents I do possess they cannot inherit; the use I make of them pleases myself, and may be hereafter of some utility to the dear infants on whom I bestow them." In this manner too did she often speak to her little pupils, whose cheerful submission and endearing humility grew with the growth of their knowledge, and expanded with the expansion of their genius. She made them perfectly understand, that on her decease they must depend on their own virtuous exertions, for on those the whole of their future fortune must depend.

They would respectfully listen to the affectionate admonitions of their beloved benefactress; and if they wept and sobbed, which was often the case, it was because her tender lectures reminded them of her mortality, nor had this language of sorrow any thing selfish in its composition.

Mrs Osmond always assured them they would, after she was gone, still enjoy the protection of her daughter, who had promised to use her interest in finding them out suitable establishments, where their accomplishments would be profitable; nor did she even tell Lewis the preferment she intended for him, before it was necessary that he should be sent to the University to finish his studies in divinity, and for this profusion she excused herself to herself by saying, if it be proper to form the ministers of Kings to the knowledge of politics, how much more to educate candidates for the service of the King of Kings in every branch of their important duties?

When Lewis was called into her closet, and informed that she intended him to pass some terms at Oxford, to fit him for a living of two hundred pounds a year, in the gift of her family, the grateful youth fell at her feet, and besought that she would con-
fine

fine her goodness to a less boundless circumference.

“What, then, do you advise me to do?” said she, rising, and making him sit beside her. “I am willing to hear what are your objections, and, if possible, to assist you in any other pursuit.”—It was a question of curiosity, not of doubt.

“I advise! I object!—Oh, dearest Madam, can you—can you think so hardly of the thankful boy, whose sister, as well as himself, you have saved from destruction, fed, cloathed, taught, and comforted!—Shall the son of Poverty advise?—Shall I presume to object?”

“Yet you have objections.”

Lewis was silent,

D 4

“Perhaps,

"Perhaps you have no predilection for the clerical function?"

"I dare not, Madam look up to so exalted a station."

"And why should you not?"

"Because—because," sobbed Lewis—
"You, Madam, are too generous; Loretta and I have been already too expensive—I could—but I fear—"

"Fear nothing—I want to hear if you can propose any other situation more to your satisfaction than the Church?"

"And may I, indeed, without fear of offending, speak all that I think?"

"Indeed you may, my good boy, and let it be with as little reserve as you would speak to your sister."

"Well

“ Well then, Madam, this is what I would say to her, because they are my very thoughts—Loretta, neither you nor I can ever repay our bountiful Lady, but we may shew our gratitude, our love, and our reverence, by dedicating our services to her use; when Mrs. Warly marries Daddy Brown, perhaps our Lady will employ you about her own person, and I will try to make myself worthy to assist Mr. Jonathan, that when he grows old—”

“ Hush, dear Lewis,” cried Mrs. Ofmond, “ the excellence of your heart needs no further explanation, as you are a gentleman by birth, you shall be a gentleman by profession; nor is the station for which I shall accomplish Loretta below the level of many young women of family, to whom fortune has been as unkind as to herself—I do not know a more respectable character than that of a virtuous and well-informed governess.”

Lewis was in the sixteenth year of his age, and two years before he was sent to college that this and several similar conversations took place in the cabinet of Mrs. Osmond, who soon after his departure, in conformity to her first plan, drove but a pair of horses, making, from the sale of all that were useless, a stock purse to answer the extra expences incurred on account of Lewis. At eighteen he was entered commoner at St. John's College, Oxford, with fifty guineas in his pocket, and an appointment between the two extremes of parsimony and profusion, the former of which he never practised or ever verged towards the latter.

Daddy Brown became a favourite appellation among the servants from Mrs. Osmond having adopted it, and encouraging the little ones never to drop it. Mrs. Warly alone called him Mr. Brown; having, with the consent of her Lady, listened
to

to his tender tale of love, she thought Daddy either too familiar or too degrading to the dignity of her future husband ever to use it; but her example did not spread itself through the family, who might have loved him less had they honoured him more.

These good people were satisfied with securing Mrs. Osmond's approbation to their intended joining of hands; but their affections for Lewis and Loretta being as great as what they felt for each other, not to be cut off, the one from his frequent visits, the other from living under the same roof with them, they made up their minds to wait a few years longer for the conjugal blessing. Mrs. Osmond very much approved of their moderation; Daddy Brown's appearance at the Lodge was now a matter of course, and every thing went on as it should do.

D 6

I have

I have looked forward to the time when Lewis was sent to College, passing over many entertaining infantine scenes to arrive at that point, rather in conformity to my own impatience than from any apprehension of being thought tedious, at least if my young readers are half so partial to the Orphans of Snowdon as I am. However, to satisfy them as well as myself, I shall turn back, to take up an adventure of no common interest, and which, I trust, will compensate for the omission of others less interesting.

During Lady Acres first visit at the Lodge, after having received under its sheltering roof the storm-beaten children of Montgomery, many of her late neighbours, in compliment to Harriet, now twelve years old, gave little balls at their houses, which she would have thought extremely charming, had Lewis and Loretta been of the party, but for reasons, extract-
ed

ed from the contemptuous airs of Lady Acres to her mother's pretty dependants, the inviters never mentioned them in the cards of invitation, therefore Harriet considered them as parties of penance more than of pleasure, went to them with regret, and returned from them with joy, to take off from Loretta's lips the parting by a kiss of meeting, so sincerely desired by both, that Loretta would never close her eyes till Harriet came home, or Harriet go to rest, however tired with dancing, till she had found a moment, unobserved by her mother, to shew herself at the bed-side of Loretta.

Mrs. Osmond, whose affections were divided between these three lovely children, saw with pleasure the growing and tender friendship of the little girls for each other; yet, being herself all candour, saw not the envy which cankered in the bosom of Lady Acres,

Acres, but attributed the small portion of favourable notice she bestowed on the meek pensioners of Providence to apathy, arising from constitutional cold-heartedness ; she even gave her some credit on the score of prudence, when, treating them with insolent neglect, she would cunningly observe how difficult it was to restrain one's self from encouraging these poor little people, who, by the wisdom of her mother, were destined to work out their own subsistence —“ For you know, mamma,” she would add, “ if I were to carry them about with Harriet, or make a fuss with them at home, it could answer no end in the world, but to set them above their condition. They are now humble and good-tempered, it would be a thousand pities, by undue indulgences, to stuff them with pride, or fill them with discontented humours, because they cannot always be a fine lady and a fine gentleman.”

To

To the *matter* of such arguments Mrs. Osmond did not object, discretion might have adopted them, but the ungracious *manner* in which they were advanced and supported by the peevish mother of Harriet, particularly after drawing comparisons between her own child and Loretta, often displeased, and were sometimes rebuked by the most gentle of all gentle monitresses, who would say, in the mildest accents, "Think of these matters, Lady Acres, as I do; they occupy my thoughts, but they do not disturb them.—Or, indeed, my dear, I am sorry to see that your nerves are so poorly; and I fear such frequent irritation will not be the means of making them stronger. Undoubtedly, you are the friend of my *unoffending* Orphans, but let me request that you be not so much your own enemy, as to let their affairs agitate or disquiet you; I ask only your kindness for them, undue indulgences are quite out of my plan."

Lewis

Lewis and Loretta, far from feeling they were *too* little indulged by their beloved benefactress, in the absence of Harriet when feasting and dancing at the houses of the great, accompanied by her mother and grandmother, would frequently steal into the garden, or wander to the extent of their bounden limits in the park to seek out some private nook, where, removed from observation, they could revert to the past, compare it with the present, and mingle the sweet tears of gratitude with those of filial lamentation.

One of these artless dialogues having given birth to the promised adventure, we must not omit to record it.

“ We find them sitting on the grass under a majestic lime tree, in full bloom, with no sound to interrupt their innocent converse but the humming of bees over their heads, innumerable colonies having assembled
thither

thither from all quarters, attracted by the mildness of the air, and the rich perfumes with which it was impregnated. Their faces were turned to the Lodge, close behind them stood a thicket of wild roses and raspberries; of such there were many in the park, judiciously placed at certain distances, as if nature had designed them nurseries of repose, or fortifications of defence for the new fallen fawns when fatigued with their gambols, or pursued by their enemies.

“Do you know how long we have lived in this beautiful place, Loretta?”

“Yes, Lewis; Mrs. Warly and Mrs. Orchard says we have been here three years; yet how can it be so very long when the time seems so short? and why should it appear so short if it is really so long?”

“I’ll tell you, sister; it is because we
have

have been taught so many things, and used so kindly."

"Yet I shall never forget poor old Snowdon; shall you, Lewis?"

"Oh never, never! nor our dear, dear father! When I am a man, and you a woman, Loretta, we will go back to the little church-yard and weep over his grave."

"But Lewis, will our dear Lady let us go, do you think?"

"She is so good that I do suppose she would let us do any thing that is not wicked or improper. Besides, she knows when we are old enough we must seek our mother, and by that time our mother may be come back to Snowdon. Oh, how will she reproach herself when she hears that poor father is dead."

"She

"She will never reproach herself," said a voice from the thicket. "Angel children, your mother is the best, the most virtuous of women."

Loretta screamed so violently, that whilst Lewis endeavoured to pacify her horrors, the speaker had escaped, and having long sought for him in vain, they ran back to the house overwhelmed with confusion, told their little tale of wonder to Warly Orchard and Jonathan, repeating it the next morning, with the greatest exactness, to Mrs. Osmond herself.

"My best children," cried she, venturing to press them in her affectionate arms, Lady Acres being absent, "my good children, your love of truth, strange as is the story you tell me, intitles you to my belief. I cannot account for the words you have heard, or the mysterious manner in which they were delivered, but I can direct where
you

you must offer up your thanks for the great blessing of being allowed to hope that your mother, though unfortunate, may not be criminal.

"That is to God," cried Loretta, "is it not, madam?"

"Certainly," interrupted Lewis, "the very same God who gave us Daddy Brown in place of our father, and afterwards inspired the heart of our Lady to pity, to save, and to love us, it is he that permits us to hope our mother is innocent." "Ah," added he, his eyes sparkling with emotion, "I had rather my mother and my sister were virtuous and poor, than I would be the son of that great Julius Cæsar of whom I read with delight and wonder."

Not being able to find a better conclusion to our little vocal episode, we shall end it by observing, that if all men would adopt the

the sentiment of honour expressed by Lewis in the reputation of their females, they would possess the very best security for their own.

Loretta's education completed, and Lewis removed to college, the dispassionate, but faithful lovers, Daddy Brown and Mrs. Warly, became one flesh by divine permission, and under the authority of the village curate.

Mrs. Osmond loaded the happy pair with useful presents, and Loretta, whose beautiful person had so long been the tender care of the bride, now officiously assisted at the hymeneal toilet, pinned the snow white ribbon round her nicely pleated coif, spread the decent handkerchief over her neat muslin gown, and fastened to her bosom the nuptial nosegay of sweet smelling jessamine, plucked by her own more fair and elegant fingers, then fondly embracing

bracing her, " May your prospects, dear Mrs. Warly," said she, " be gay like these flowers, but may they also be as durable as my gratitude."

She acted too as bride's-maid at the altar, where, joining the hands of her two friends together, she whispered to Daddy Brown, " By giving you the best wife in the world, I begin to acquit myself of many, many filial obligations." I shall say no more of this rustic wedding, only that when the new married pair set out for Daddy Brown's farm, Mrs. Osmond, to send them away with dry cheeks, and to comfort her *protégées*, not only invited them to the Lodge as often as they pleased, but promised them a visit, accompanied by Loretta, at their own habitation before the summer was over.

Lewis had now been several months at the university, from whence such accounts were transmitted of the young student, as,
together

together with his moderate impositions on her generosity, fully answered the sanguine expectations of his gracious patroness, and enlivened the spirits of his affectionate sister.

About this time Lady Acres, whose appearance was not expected that year at the Lodge, communicated to her mother, by letter, a piece of intelligence calculated to engross her attention, if not to engage her approbation. It was that she had secured for her daughter a most desirable match with the son of a widow lady, who, though without a title of her own, was nevertheless nearly allied to many families of the very first distinction. Her Ladyship made it appear, by the unusual warmth of her style, that she was quite enraptured both with the mother and son; Mrs. Melbourn was all to be conceived of dignity, fine talents, and fine breeding; Algernon Melbourn immensely rich, immensely handsome, the passion of all fashionable women before

before he went to the continent, from whence he was soon expected to return more highly polished than ever; so that there could be no possible doubt but Miss Acres would join with all the rest of her sex in approving him for a husband.

Lewis, when the summer vacation commenced, arrived at the Lodge; his person so charming, his improvements so visible, that as he saluted his gracious patroness, she first examined him with silent pleasure, and then exclaimed, "My dear Lewis, you are wonderfully grown; if your progress in literature has been equally rapid, you are by this time a complete scholar."

"Whatever I am, Madam," replied the youth, as with respectful tenderness he pressed her hand to a heart overflowing with gratitude, "I owe it all to your goodness. The condition in which you found, and from which you rescued us, was never
so

so strongly contrasted as at this moment !
—Deserted by one parent—lamenting another—lost to our only friend—famishing with hunger—covered with rags—ignorant as savages, and like them wandering from mountain to mountain ! In you we have recovered father, mother, friend !—Famine fled at your presence ; you exchanged our rags for apparel that would not have disgraced your own children ; you have redeemed us from ignorance ; we were savages, and you have civilized us !”

The first time our Orphans of Snowdon were *tête-à-tête*, Loretta told Lewis the news of their friend Harriet’s projected marriage with a young gentleman soon expected from his travels ; to which he only replied, that next to her own happiness, the felicity of Miss Acres was the nearest to his wishes.

He suppressed a sigh, but could not command his countenance, the sudden change of which, from red to pale, alarmed the innocent Loretta; and she asked eagerly if he foresaw any thing in the alliance threatening to the peace of their amiable Harriet.

“Why should you think it?” said he, his colour again shifting.

“Because, Lewis, I did not know but you might have heard, amongst your Oxford acquaintance, something or other in the character or disposition of this Mr. Melbourn, which had made you think him unworthy of the dear and amiable Miss Acres.”

“Dear and amiable indeed!” retorted the son of Montgomery.

“Ah!

"Ah! then you fear she is too good for Mr. Melbourn!"

" I know nothing of Mr. Melbourn ; I never heard him named but by yourself."

"If so, why are you thus disturbed?"

"I disturbed! What should disturb me, Loretta?"

“ Dear brother, you are certainly vexed, though you will not own it.”

“ Well, then, I will own that, I understanding as I do the delicacy of our revered Mrs. Osmond’s grand-daughter, I cannot but feel it must be offended at a proposal, in which inclination can have no part.— All angel as she is, by over persuasion, she might be prevailed on to bestow her hand on a man who knows not it’s value; a fool, who will not discern it; or a mercenary villain.

villain, who may receive it only as a pledge of her fortune."

"God forbid, Lewis, any husband of this odious description should fall to the lot of Harriet. Much less will she, who is the darling of her family, have such an one forced on her acceptance. You know, Lewis, it is one thing to *advise*, and another to *dictate*."

"Perhaps, Loretta, you are in the right; so let us talk no more about it; but, come (drawing her arm through his), you shall go with me into the park, where I have promised to meet our dear friend and governor, Jonathan, at a consultation to be held on the best situation for the magnolia trees, which our benefactress received last night from a friend she has at Carolina."

"Yes, a friend;" observed Loretta, as she tripped lightly and cheerly by the side
of

of her brother, "I dare say this friend has, like ourselves, moved within the sphere of our Lady's benevolence. Oh, how sweet to shew the gratitude one cannot express!—If I had worlds in my gift, I would lay them all at the feet of Mrs. Osmond."

“ And I,” said Lewis, “ would forfeit the dearest of my wishes, even if life itself suspended on its success, rather than abuse her generosity, or know that I deserved to lose her confidence.”

The first days of Lewis's return to the Lodge were dedicated to duty, affection, and acknowledgments. Mrs. Osmond and his sister engrossed the two former; the latter were dispensed around on those who had taken care of their persons, assisted in their education, or administered to their harmless infant pastimes, of which he acquitted himself with such humility, dignified by manly grace, as, had he one enemy

enemy in the family, must have converted him into a friend.

There was still a duty left unperformed, but not unremembered. He asked, and obtained, permission to visit Daddy Brown and his good dame, who fared well, and did a world of good within the bounds of their little farm, and prospered in all their undertakings.

How natural to wish that all such excellent beings as themselves were equally fortunate; yet how often do our wishes miscarry. How often do we see the virtuous philanthropist sinking under oppression, and the vicious, the malicious, the selfish, swimming smoothly down the stream of life; prosperity at their helm, and fortune fluttering in their sails.

Mrs. Osmond thought she read in the beautiful eyes of Loretta, that she would
have

have no objection to accompany Lewis on his tour to the farm ; and, finding she had guessed truly, sent them thither in her own post-chaise, permitting them to stay one night with their early protector ; partly to indulge her *protégées*, and partly to favour her horses, of which she had now but a pair, except for the saddle : why the other four were disposed of, surely my reader cannot so soon have forgotten.

Having lost sight of her endearing, as well as enlivening companions, Mrs. Osmond fauntered into the garden ; from thence strolled to that part of the park where her people were busy in planting the magnolia trees, of which we have before spoken.

She looked at every object by which she passed, yet observed none ; her thoughts were full of the travellers ; but their absence made a vacancy in her enjoyments,

which nothing but their presence could fill up. Her meditations on these children of Providence were so entirely to the contentment of her noble heart, that, to indulge them with the greater freedom, she sat down on a rush seat fronting the magnificent iron gates, that opened to the touch of any road passenger, whether on foot or on horse-back, in a coach, or in a cart; the poor and miserable being quite as readily admitted to her presence as the rich and happy.

Delightful was the reverie which brought before her the Orphans of Snowdon in all their charms, all their perfections! It was a reverie of rapture, which had taken possession of her senses, whilst her soul directed its energy to heaven, beseeching for them the guardianship of Providence, when called upon to resign the post with which its own divine will had invested her.

So deeply was she occupied between pleasure and piety, that she did not perceive her solitude to be invaded, till a long heavy sigh, which almost seemed to breathe upon her cheek, and the nearness of the object, made her start. She looked up, and saw standing before her, seemingly in contemplation serious as her own, a man of a noble figure, habited in deep mourning, his arms folded, and his looks cast on the ground.

An air of sadness always recommended the wearer to Mrs. Osmond's particular notice. She saw in the dejection of this stranger the livery of misfortune, at least she thought so; and, impressed by the idea, hastily rose; saying, in a voice the most invitingly sweet—

“Whether I am indebted, Sir, to chance, or curiosity, for the honour of seeing you in my pleasure grounds, you must give me

leave to request that you will be seated.—It is easy for me to guess, from never having seen you before in the neighbourhood, that your walk this morning has not been a short one.”

“ Oh, God ! then,” cried the intruder, starting as from a dream, “ you, madam, must be Mrs. Osmond herself. The question I durst not presume to ask, your benignity has resolved : there cannot be two such women !—that is impossible !”

Mrs. Osmond, at all times more ready to hear any other body's panegyric than her own ; and, perhaps, far from being pleased with a familiar compliment from one she did not know who, abated a little of that benevolent warmth with which she had first accosted him. Something like fear at what might be his real designs, whether on her understanding, her purse, or on both, made her measure with her eye

eye the distance between her and the labourers at work on the plantation, whilst, without renewing her request that he would be seated, she only asked, with as much shyness as she could assume, if, now that he knew her name, he had any commands particular to communicate.

“ I have, Madam, *very* particular communications to make, if allowed to repose them in the privacy of your keeping.”

“ Since your business is of so *private* a nature,” said she, fixing her penetrating eyes full upon his face, speaking too with more meaning than met the ear, “ I would advise you, Sir, to leave it until you find a more favourable opportunity ; for you must have observed *my* people are so near, that you may be disagreeably interrupted.”

The flush of shame which passed over the stranger's countenance, not only made

it intelligible that he understood the full sense of her meaning, but increased her suspicion as to the nature of his intentions; nor were her thoughts in a less state of alarm, when, putting his hand into his pocket, from whence she expected to see him draw out a pistol, he said, in a voice extremely hesitating—"I am no assassin, madam! But I am—no matter what! It is my fault that you, Madam, have misunderstood my character—I should sooner have announced to you, that I am at least a gentleman;" and, instead of a pistol, presented a name-card, on which was inscribed—*Sir William Jones, Bart. Ferryford Castle.*

It would be difficult to say which was now the most confused of the two; but Mrs. Osmond first rallied—begged his pardon—confessed her spirits were a little agitated, having that morning parted from two young friends, the loss of whose society
had

had left a void in her mind, which made it ready to receive the most ridiculous or romantic impressions.

The ice being broken, she so graciously performed all the duties of hospitality, that if any thing could have banished melancholy from the features of Sir William, it would have flown before her ease and politeness; but the very best of her endeavours were too weak to contend with gloom deep rooted, if not habitual.

Never was there a more beautiful morning, which Sir William seized on as an excuse for chusing to converse *al fresco*, in preference to the Lodge, whither Mrs. Osmond had invited him: he added, with a sigh, that was an honour, of which he dared not avail himself until he had unmasked the whole of his doubtful pretensions to the clemency of its amiable possessor,

Mrs.

Mrs. Osmond, smiling an assent, reoccupied her seat under the spreading walnut tree: he followed her example, placed himself by her side, his looks rather averted from than seeking her's, whilst, in a low tremulous voice, he asked, how long it might be before she expected the children of poor Montgomery would return to her protection?

“ Good God !” cried Mrs. Osmond, with astonishment, “ are you not a stranger, Sir, in this country ! Have you ever seen my precious Orphans of Snowdon ? Do you know any thing of their father ?”

“ I saw them in their cradle; I have seen them in this park !” and, with a groan which pierced to the very soul of his auditors—“ It was I, Madam, who, by separating them from the arms of a tender mother, forced them upon *your* protection. —It was I, who, by tearing a virtuous
wife

wife from the embraces of an honest husband!—have been *his* murderer, *their* enemy, and my *own* destruction!”

Mrs. Osmond, petrified with horror, did not, because she could not, make any reply.—“ You are silent, Madam,” he continued—“ your soul recoils at the presence of a monster !”

“ Ah! Sir, how much are you mistaken.—I am not the Almighty, who alone can examine into the *sincerity* of your professions; but as far as one erring mortal may presume to judge of another, I should pronounce, that he who can speak so feelingly of his own crimes, leaves no just grounds for the condemnation of others.”

“ Preserve—Oh, preserve this heavenly lenity, Madam!—cherish this godlike spark of mercy! Hear what are my offences; and, if it be possible, then tell me they may

may be in part extenuated by the retribution I have long, long meditated, but which the death of my father could alone enable me finally to execute."

" Pray, Sir William, proceed, if you think me worthy of your confidence; I will never abuse it, or refuse to your contrition any consolation that can belong to *honourable* sympathy."

" Whatever appearance of chance there may be in my intrusion, it is altogether the effect of design. I have several days been concealed in this neighbourhood, to watch a favourable opportunity of claiming from your humanity an interview, which I dared not to demand of your justice. - I desired that it should also be private, for reasons which you shall know, Madam, bye and bye. I heard of the little excursion you had permitted your interesting *protégées*. I watched them out of the gates; I entered
the

the park, walked towards the Lodge, to throw myself at your feet, to make my confession, and intreat your compassion. My heart, trembling under the terrors of retrospection, beat with such increasing violence at every step which brought the guilty criminal nearer to the pure residence of virtue, that, unable to conquer shame, I indulged its propensities, retracted from the meeting so anxiously sought, so fervently desired; and again passing the gates, I walked backwards and forwards before them, in such a state of indecision, as amounted to torments only inferior to what are suffered by the damned in a world of recompense!

“ Pardon the distraction of my language; any other would give you but a feeble idea of my situation, when unobserved I saw you take possession of this seat.— I hoped, yet I *feared*, it was yourself: had I been certain, I should never—no, never—have

—have summoned courage to approach you ; but incertitude was my support, and you know, Madam, what has followed.”

“ Pardon my interrupting you, Sir. If I mistake not, you said, that once before you had been on the spot where I have now the honour of speaking to you, and that you then saw Lewis and Loretta Montgomery ?”

“ Oh, Madam !—Oh, Mrs. Osmond !—what an instant was that, in which I contemplated the lovely orphans ! When I saw the tears flow down their infant cheeks to the memory of their father, and told myself that it was *I* who extracted them !—when I heard them lament the fall of their mother, and upbraided myself for the disgrace I had brought on her spotless virtues !—then my heart smote me double with the iron hand of compunction !—then the silence imposed by shame, by
fear,

ear, on my unrestrainable curiosity to behold those dear, those injured little ones, gave way to the agony of the moment!—I spoke from my ambuscade—I told them their mother was virtuous! Empires would not have purchased from my trembling lips another word, and I fled with a thorn in my conscience, which nothing but lenity like your's will ever be able to extract; yet, ever boundless as is the mercy of your disposition, I almost despair of my cure, when my wounds are exposed."

"I wait impatiently," said Mrs. Osmond, "for that exposition; and will venture to assure you, I do not think your case desperate. The pain you experience convinces me your cure is more than half effected. Such remorse as your's combines in its nature two very opposite extremes, acting at once as a burning caustic and a healing balsam. But, pray, proceed, or how shall I be able to prescribe.

Depend

Depend on the exertion of my best skills and that I will give you as few interruptions as possible."

"And I, Madam, to avoid being tedious, will shorten the horrid recital as much as circumstances will permit.

"My education was in the common routine with that of other men, who have no mother to form their morals, younger brothers to share their inheritance, or sisters to portion from the personals of a rich family.

"I shall not, Madam, insult your chastity by naming the particular vices in which, at the age of nineteen, I was completely initiated; but I confess them to have been many and disgraceful. Such were my home improvements, when, with a princely appointment, a worthy governor of my father's chusing, an intriguing valet of my

OWN

own choice, good health, high spirits, and the most perfect contempt for every other pursuit but that of my pleasure, I was content to travel."

Mrs. Osmond sighed deeply, and Sir William continued.

"The only pain of which I was susceptible, on bidding adieu to the dissipations of my own country, proceeded from a sort of boyish passion I had contracted for an amiable and beautiful girl, the niece of my mother, whom I *fancied* I loved, who certainly did love me. Fate was on this occasion more favourable than I deserved. My cousin yielded up her pure soul to heat before her peace could be imbibed, knowing she had placed her affections in a wretch!—a wretch unworthy to possess them!"

Sir

Sir William's voice faltered—he struggled with his emotions, and conquered them.

“ Restraint of any kind, militating against my system of free-agency, I considered as the most intolerable evil. The company, but much more the lectures, of my governor, became insupportable, and I tried to get rid of both, by making myself so perfectly disagreeable, that, at last he wrote to my father, and got his dismissal, I having paved his way to obtain it without remonstrances, by having frequently complained in my letters of his little knowledge of foreign courts, as well as his total deficiency in all the forms of politeness; making, at the same time, so much of my own prudence, and my own accomplishments, that I never groaned under the authority of any succeeding governor, of course I was in no haste to revisit the land of my nativity; but when I did return,

too partial father declared himself satisfied with my improvements.

“ These improvements being merely external, I took care to blazon them at all public exhibitions; became a member of several fashionable clubs, chose for my select friends such spirits of *ton*, whose views are the destruction of domestic happiness; and, like them, soon attached myself to more than one married woman of high rank, and was forced at last to seek a temporary refuge from the claims of two ladies on my hand, their own being legally fet at liberty.

“ With the most savage contempt for the whole sex, so many of whom had yielded themselves the easy prey of seduction, and some who had even acted the part of seducers, I rambled into Wales, with the consent of my father, he having a liberal, though honest heart, and his temper unfouled,

foured, by not being called upon to pay damages for my transgressions, he threw over them the veil of kindness, and gave to my vices the appellation of pardonable errors."

"What criminal indulgence!" exclaimed Mrs. Osmond.

"Hold, Madam!" cried Sir William, covering his face with both his hands, "waste not on the father those virtuous emotions, but on the guilty head of his son let the whole of them be exhausted! Oh, how humiliating the repetition of crimes, which will eternally blot my name from the fair page of honour!"

"Think not so hardly of yourself," replied Mrs. Osmond, penetrated by the force of his expression; "however dark the blot, tears of repentance must wash it away,

away, and on the same spot we shall find the name of Sir William Jones written."

"I dare not assume those hopes, your goodness, Madam, generously wishes to inspire; but I promise to grasp them as I would do my salvation, if you again hold them within my reach, after you know the nature of that sin, which, in my own opinion, consigns me to perdition."

Mrs. Osmond felt extremely awkward; afraid to say too much, or too little; she therefore only signified, by silence, that her attention would keep pace with his recital, and thus he continued.

"Many are the natural curiosities abounding in Wales. Such of my companions as had travelled through that romantic country, formed the *route* I was to take, enriching it with as many objects as their memories retained, to prevent me, they

said, from sinking under the solitude of my pilgrimage. They also offered bets, to any amount, and at any odds, that the two divinities, who now persecuted me with their disgusting fondness, would form new attachments before six weeks had expired, and leave me at liberty to return from banishment a free fellow, without female incumbrances.

“ As fools swallow the enemy of their reason, because it sparkles in the goblet; so, filled with the frothy predictions of my dissolute associates, with a light heart, and thoughtless gaiety, I ran from place to place, attended only by my infamous valet, looking at every thing, enjoying nothing, and cursing the constancy of all women-kind, for the sake of my two tormentors, who followed me with long epistles of reproach wherever I went, my friends having betrayed every post-town through which

which I was to pass, in order to purchase a jest for themselves at my expence.

“ Pity me, Madam, as you view with what reluctance I approach that horrid precipice, from the brink of which there is but once step into the gulph of unutterable confusion ! My fate is not to be averted by delay ; thus then do I at once rush upon it.

“ At Snowdon ended my peregrinations—and at Snowdon commenced my misery ! I there saw, and loved to madness, the beautiful wife of Montgomery !—the tender mother of Lewis and Loretta !——My God !” cried he, “ her image never forsakes me :—sometimes I behold her with all the charms of a Madona, nursing on her bosom the pledges of a worthy husband’s affection—her peerless eyes sparkling with content—the purest glow of innocence animating her artless countenance—angelic

softness in her voice—wisdom in her words—sweetness and timidity in every motion!—But, oh! I see her too with all these charms defaced by agony—dragged from the infants of her love—her eyes invariably fixed on vacancy—her delicate cheeks divested of their bloom—her voice, her words, her motions—all, all arrested by insanity! He paused.—

“Go on!” said Mrs. Osmond, holding a handkerchief to her face, that Sir William might not perceive the deadly paleness of which she was conscious. “Pray, Sir, go on.”

“Thank you—thank you!” cried the agitated narrator: “you can look on this infernal picture of my infernal vices, yet do not execrate the monster, who, at this distance of time, colours it with his heart’s best blood!” Again he paused; then added—“The worst is passed—you know me
for

for the first of villains. By what steps I attained to that pre-eminence will be less difficult to a conscience violated, but not hardened."

Mrs. Osmond bowed her head, but did not interrupt the sad tale, in which, for the sake of her beloved orphans, she was interested almost to sickness.

"I met Montgomery by accident; he invited me to his cottage, and, assisted by the wife of his dotage, performed all the kindnesses of hospitality. He was old enough to be her father. Actuated by false philosophy, I would not believe the evidence of my senses. I thought it impossible that the decent fondness she expressed could be real; yet even the shadow of her love bestowed on another, hatched the viper Envy in my treacherous bosom; and whilst *he* strove to promote my ease, *I*

was making it my study to destroy his happiness !

“ The more I meditated on mischief, the greater my caution to conceal it. Once or twice I ventured to touch that dear hand which yielded too willingly to the grasp of age ; but virtue, however simple, is sublime, and her's was rendered an awful guardian against the assault of freedoms, by the very beauty which excited them.— Any thing is better for a libertine to contend with than equal proportions of attractive sweetness and repelling dignity. I felt the truth of this observation in my distant, but insidious, trials on the unsuspecting heart of Montgomery's Mary. My courage forsook me. I no more approached her with freedom, or gazed on her with admiration. Mine I determined she should be, and I laid my designs accordingly.

“ My

“ My confidential servant, who in wickedness could only be excelled by his master, advised that I should take her away by force, or stratagem ; and what *he* dared to advise, *I* dared to execute. A carriage and horses were purchased for the occasion, of which the rascal himself undertook the conduct, to prevent being traced, by employing strangers in the business. He assured me he could carry us to England with great safety, having formerly been accustomed to drive ; and that the horses he had bought were so remarkably strong, that he would answer for their going thirty miles a day for six months together. Of this plan I approved, and now only waited a favourable opportunity to seize on my destined prey before I put it into execution.”

Mrs. Osmond seemed to have forgotten every other object to fix her undivided thoughts on the persecuted family of Mont-

mery ; she did not even observe, when the labourers went home to their frugal repast, her own first dinner bell sounded in vain, and its last summons would have been equally unheeded, if Sir William, at the conclusion of his sentence, had not been reminded, by its deep tones, that he was intruding on her family arrangements ; when, starting from his seat, he began to apologize for the detention, with which he reproached himself, and requested that she would allow him the honour of renewing his audience on the following morning.

Perhaps there are many discreet matrons who would have supposed it disgraceful, dangerous, even sinful, to hold converse with a *self-acknowledged* villain ; and perhaps, at the same time, would have been far from shunning his society, had that character proceeded from any body except himself.

With

With Mrs. Osmond the question was reversed. Had she been told, there lived such a wretch as Sir William Jones, she would have hid herself as from a monstrous production of nature, the influence of whose venom even the purity of innocence could not escape. But she, with noble discrimination, found, in his own frank, ingenuous confession, and read in the language of that true contrition with which his soul was tortured, enough to pity, as well as enough to condemn. She therefore invited him to dine with her at the Lodge. He felt her goodness, whilst he refused to avail himself of its consequences. She then asked if he would take his coffee with her in the evening? This favour he would also have declined, if Mrs. Osmond had not hinted, that it was possible the weather might prevent them from meeting again in the park; adding—"Your communications, Sir, are so interesting, and the absence of those dear creatures

chiefly concerned in them will be so short, that all scrupulous delays should be avoided, and I certainly must have the honour of expecting you at seven."

"So much graciousness, such definitive wisdom, there is no resisting," cried Sir William; then politely made his adieus, promising to attend at the hour she had appointed.

The penitent narrator shewed himself in Mrs. Osmond's drawing-room precisely at the hour she had named. Her reception of him, though easy, polite, and almost friendly, gave no animation to his countenance. His face was pale, his air dejected; shyness directed his steps, and Melancholy, in the words of the poet, "marked him for her own."

Mrs. Osmond rung the bell. Old Jonathan brought in a salver with tea, cakes, and

and coffee; which having first carried to his Lady, he next presented to her guest, very much wondering from whence he came, and why he was so agitated that he could not hold the cup steady in his hands. These remarks would not have escaped a less curious observer. Mrs. Osmond saw it with concern; hurried over the little repast, lest any thing might fall from Sir William, in his absent and confused state of mind, that she did not wish the servants to hear; she therefore ran the risk of burning her throat, to dismiss them; then silently waited till he should himself recommence the broken narrative.

“ This consideration, Madam,” said he, “ to conceal from your domestics that shame, arising from the recollection of honour basely, *most* basely forfeited, is not lost on a mind already oppressed by gratitude for your numberless condescensions. — Oh, God! what a state of distraction

is mine ! I would retreat from my task, but a sentiment stronger than shame forces me to proceed.

“ An opportunity to carry off the wife of Montgomery, for which I waited with infernal subtilty, did not present itself for more than three weeks. It came at last—it came too soon ! Would that it had never come ! In the absence of her husband, I forced her from his sight for ever ! The villainous instrument of my vices counselled me to wait in my chaise at a small distance from the cabin, to receive the beautiful victim, when he should have persuaded her, or frightened her, into an elopement. I did so. He was gone about half an hour, when I saw him advancing towards me, leading Mary by the arm, who shewed no unwillingness, or raised any cries for assistance. Exulting in her passiveness, I held out my hand : still she made no resistance ; and drawing her into the carriage, I exclaimed,

claimed, ‘ My life, my love, from this moment you are the mistress of my destiny !’— She sweetly smiled, but answered me not, which I considered as an effort of modesty ; the nature of that sentiment being unknown to the sensualist, he conceives it may be met with in the arms of prostitution : the mistress who would please, must wear the semblance of modesty ; for whilst he admires the shadow, he flatters himself he has found the substance.

“ During our first stage, I made the horrible discovery that the lovely person only of Mary was in my power, and that her senses had fled before the persecution of a devil, if possible, blacker than his master.

“ The moment I was fully ascertained of this soul-rending misfortune, I had no passion to contend with but that of rage. With a pistol in my hand I dismounted my driver,

driver, and holding it at his breast, drew from his quivering soul, that, finding he had no chance of conveying her to me by persuasion, in hopes to terrify her into a more complying temper, he had first bound her two infants to their bed, then stood over them with a drawn knife, making her believe he would murder them both, if she did not write down the words he should dictate. She did write them; it was to save the lives of her innocent babes; and she plunged a dagger into the bosom of her husband!

“ From this time, said the wretch, she made no more words, but came quietly away with me, as you, Sir, might have perceived. I did not fire my pistol upon the villain who dared to make this confession. I felt, for the first time, there was a greater than himself in existence, and might have pointed it against my own head, but for the fear of what would become of the
poor

poor creature, so lately the object of my love, now only of my commiseration : that virtue I meditated to destroy, I now swore to protect. Those senses which were fled, I would now have recalled by consenting to lose my own. The envy I had felt at the happiness of Montgomery was succeeded by compassion ; and the exultations of a successful ravisher turned to the compunction of a self-detected traitor !”

“ Just heaven !” exclaimed Mrs. Osmond.

“ Ah, Madam ! if you can stand the recital of this last dreadful scene, I shall no more make you shudder for my guilt !— Mine was not the remorse of a moment—it has included a life of penitence !

“ To convey back the illumined soul my treachery had rendered dark ; to return the owner his beautiful casket, dispoiled of its
richer

richer gem, was impossible ! In such a state the husband would have been more wretched by a re-union, than by supposing his wife had voluntarily eloped from her family : she might have become the object of his suspicion, perhaps of his neglect. How could I believe he would give credit to the assertions of a villain, had I dared so greatly to my own destruction, as to vindicate the innocence of his pity-moving Mary ?

“ My repentance was not, at its first appearance, so deeply established as to force on me a sacrifice militating against my honour, against my duty, against my interest ; the world must have scorned me ; I should for ever have banished myself from the presence of, and perhaps have been disinherited by, an exasperated father, severe to crimes, as indulgent to follies. In this struggle between my own preservation, and a sincere desire to provide for the safety
of

of Montgomery's wife, I thought on a medium, by which both might be secured.

“ At the first small inn, where we stopped to take refreshment, I told the people of the house, that the person I conducted was my sister, an unfortunate, harmless idiot, whom I was carrying from the rest of her family, because, having less compassion, they were resolved to shut her up in a mad-house. I then asked if they knew of any decent elderly woman, diligent, and of unblemished character, who would go where I should place my charge, and accept the situation of her companion as well as attendant ?

“ All these questions were proposed in the presence of the dear, pensive blank, who had neither sighed, wept, or uttered, from the moment of her captivity.

“ At the recommendation of my landlady, I hired for the purpose a widow, who
had

had seen better days; respected by her neighbours; sedate, honest, and, as they all assured me, of a mild, affectionate disposition. They also procured for me, at my request, an able postillion, to supply the place of the rascal to whom I was bound by cords of infamy not to be broken, and whom I dispatched to provide a small house in the vicinity of Bristol, bidding him return to the ferry, and wait my arrival, that, conducting me thither himself, it might be impossible to trace me further than the passage, if Montgomery should take it into his head to pursue me.

“ Never since she continued my *silent* prisoner, never did I confide in my own strength so much, as to look on this wreck of loveliness, but in the presence of her faithful guardian, who day and night attended her with the fond solicitude of a mother, and who, mistaking my tears of contrition for those of filial affection, conveyed

veyed to my soul, under the panegyric of praise, a thousand daggers, more lacerating than the keenest arrows of reproach, dipped in the poison of revenge.

“ My visits to the poor forlorn were restricted by prudence. I saw her seldom, but I saw her always the same, speechless, inactive, insensible ; she walked when led to the garden ; she eat, when the meat was set before her ; her eyes seldom turned ; she shewed no traces of recollection. I never saw her but with horror ; I never parted from her without reprobating my own conduct.”

“ God remit all you sins !” said Mrs. Osmond, whose tears flowed in unison with her feelings. “ When in your absolute power, when you might have respected her less, and she might have been rendered more miserable ;—then to spare, to cherish, to protect her, is an act that must be acceptable

ceptable to that Providence, who, by the very stroke which deprived her of reason, saved her from pollution !”

“ Ah ! Madam,” replied Sir William, shaking his head with an air of despondency, “ it is only the good and virtuous who have any right to extract honeyed consolation from flowers of retrospection. Ill would it become the seducer of innocence, the coward assassins of domestic happiness, to draw comfort to his conscience from the negative consideration, that, in the worst action of his life, he was not quite so wicked as it was possible he might have been.”

The remainder of Sir William’s narrative I shall reduce to a much narrower compass, by simply detailing the substance of it, unincumbered by descriptions, remarks, or interrogations.

Every

Every succeeding year Sir William privately dispatched the minion of his vices to learn what was become of the wifeless husband and motherless children. The miscreant went no farther than where he could lavish his master's property to his own satisfaction; when again appearing before him, he gave such succinct accounts of Montgomery and his little ones, as put it out of doubt that he was just come from Snowdon, where he had seen or heard all that he thought proper to relate. In these accounts he seldom varied; the old man was always well and hearty; the children always growing, and seeming to want for nothing; and the money sent for their use always delivered sometimes in one disguise, sometimes in another.

One journey out of seven that he pretended to have made, he in reality did perform: it was two years after Montgomery's decease, and the disappearance of his

his hapless orphans from their native mountains.

Sir William tried what effect this intelligence would produce on the diseased mind of his prisoner ; declaring to Mrs. Osmond, that, had she recovered her senses, he fully determined, at that time, to have made her his wife ; but the trial, on which he suspended the hopes of her restoration, was abortive. She heard him speak of her husband's death, and that her children had wandered nobody knew whither, with as little emotion, as one born deaf would shew if a house was falling over his head.

Excluded from the most distant view of her recovery, and tormented by the idea of having, perhaps, involved the fate of her offspring in as great, or greater, misfortunes than her own, he became so entirely the prey of vexation and remorse, that to a violent fever succeeded a jaundice, the aspect

aspect of which was of so threatening a nature as greatly to alarm his father, who for many years had lamented the melancholy under which his son evidently laboured, though he tried to conceal it, and never failed stoutly to deny that he was dispirited, or had cause for being so.

The town physicians soon pronounced it a Bath case, and incurable, if not relieved by the efficacy of its waters. Thither he was conveyed in a litter, accompanied by his father, who remained with him long enough to see the black, brassy hue of his complexion pretty well washed away, and so far restored to his habitual strength as to mix with the company on the walks, or at the rooms. When returning home, the invalid, being left to his own guidance, relapsed into those fits of *sadness* which he loved to indulge, and which it was painful for him to disguise.

His

His confidential emissary fearing how this gloom might terminate, and knowing that two such masters seldom fall to the share of one servant, laboured to re-kindle some vivid spark from amongst the dying embers of those passions which had yielded him no small profit; but the allurements of vice must be ill received, where vice itself is extinguished: so finding only one way of recommending his services, to that one he adhered; pretended the severest repentance, wept over the remembrance of his aggravated cruelties, talked of nothing but the poor lost wife and children of Montgomery, groaned at every mention made of them, and, to ease the conscience of his employer, would greatly dare to take upon himself the whole guilt of their destruction; and as these sort of conversations increased the despondency of his master, he was always sure to have them well received.

About

About this time, what had happened three years before, namely, the Orphans of Snowdon having been taken up and sheltered by Mrs. Osmond became the topic of general conversation. The well remembered names of Lewis and Loretta reached the ears of their penitent destroyer, who immediately, unknown to any body and unattended, set out for the residence of that Lady, undetermined as to the motive of his journey, whether to declare himself a villain, or only to gratify his turbulent remorse, by snatching a stolen view of the wreck of his villainy, which latter he accomplished in the park, as before related. But returning to Bath, the first thing he discovered was, his cabinet broke open, and his valet, whom he never heard of after, decamped with money and valuables to the amount of three thousand pounds. "He is a knave of my *own* making," said his master, with a sigh, and sat down with his loss.

As to the wife of Montgomery, she continued in the deplorable state of idiotism at the death of her betrayer's father, just three weeks prior to Sir William's appearance at the Lodge, and with the repetition of which event he concluded his dolorous relation.

Let none of my gentle readers condemn the effects this tale of woe produced on the generous, candid, enlightened soul of Mrs. Osmond; or say, that she condescended to deviate from the dictates of rectitude, by feeling more respect for the good, than abhorrence for the evil, deeds of the grief-stricken narrator. If his former conduct sunk his character below contempt, his subsequent self-denials exalted it above praise. He asked her advice; she gave it with confidence. He besought her assistance; she promised it freely. He consulted her on his plans; they were founded on good sense, supported by delicacy; and she approved them.

Every

Every thought of marriage, he said, was now laid aside; even should the injured object of his illicit passion be restored to her senses, still he would renounce it. "What reparation," cried he, "should I offer her by holding out to her acceptance the hand of her destroyer?" No; it is another sort of atonement on which I have decided. The retribution I meditate shall never owe its birth to selfish gratification! That love, which would dishonour her to reward, may be cherished by her orphan children—perhaps orphaned by the wretch who would now adopt them as his own; provided they are kept ignorant of those crimes, a knowledge of which must for ever set me at a distance from their innocent affections! Remember, then, my dear Madam, I am only to be presented to your *protégées* under the honourable distinction of your friend. As *your* friend, their hearts will open to my kindness; for *your* sake I shall be dear to them; on my own account I

must ever be the object of their detestation."

Mrs. Osmond renewed her promises to assist him in his own way; and it was agreed upon that Sir William should immediately take Lewis under his protection, to give him an education suitable to the heir of his immense fortune, name, and title; the latter having no further to go in the male line of his own family, he had already used his interest with the minister, and obtained his promise of a barony; the succession to be filled up at his own appointment, to which he had nominated Lewis Montgomery.

Sir William had been ordered to travel for the recovery of his broken constitution, and meant to try the experiment as soon as Lewis should have kept his two next terms at college; more on account of becoming the companion of his adopted son's tour through

through Europe, than from any benefit he expected to reap on the score of his own health.

“ For Loretta,” said the repentant baronet, “ I shall make no provision until my death, or my return from abroad, when it will be time enough to rob her of that dependance on your bounty, which does her more honour than all the riches in the world.”

Mrs. Osmond's reason could not reject the compliment which her heart approved, and those new friends did not separate till the evening was pretty far advanced, nor would she part with him then until he engaged to pass the whole following day at the Lodge ; so that before Lewis and his sister came home every thing relating to their present and future prospects were arranged with order, and talked over with delight, from both of which, present and

future, the children of Montgomery were to be totally excluded. Lewis was to suppose he owed the friendship of Sir William to accidental partiality, and Loretta was to know him as the favoured guest of her patroness.

All these matters settled, Sir William said, he had now but one weight which hung upon his spirits: it was the difficulty of finding a proper substitute, who, in his absence, would sometimes look in upon his unhappy victim, to see that she was not neglected. He was fully satisfied with the care taken of her by the woman who had always attended her; but she being old, and life uncertain, it was necessary to his peace of mind that casualties should be provided for.

Mrs. Osmond not only offered herself as his deputy during his absence, but proposed also to try at redeeming her senses,
by

by one more effort before his departure. "Perhaps," said she, "the sight of her children, and their tender endeavours to awaken the sensibility of nature may be attended with success. I will go with them myself, and you, if you please, shall escort us."

Sir William looked more than astonished! He started—changed colour—and asked if she thought it possible for him to stand in the presence of such a circle, and not pay the ransom of his life for the injuries he had done them?

This reply drew on a very interesting debate, which ended to the good Lady's entire satisfaction. She concealed so many thorns, and scattered so many flowers, in the path of his reluctance, that at last he stepped over all his generous objections, and with more satisfaction than he had long known, or ever might have known, but

for the art of self-reconciliation possessed by Mrs. Osmond, he promised to do whatever it was her pleasure to command.

“ Consider,” said Mrs. Osmond, “ I am not merely the faithful repository of your secret, but the jealous guardian of your interest in the hearts of my young friends ; they shall know that it is to you they owe the discovery of their mother’s lamentable situation ; but they shall never be told an error on your part, so fully cancelled, reduced her to that state ; to you they must be indebted for having found out the abode of their mother ; but never, never shall they upbraid you as having procured it for her.

“ When you have visited some time at the Lodge, and engaged their affections, I will, before them, relate to you such anecdotes of their lives as I have heard from themselves, or from the good Brown, who
first

first took them up in Wales. Nothing of design shall appear in my little story. I shall repeat, too, your own words, spoken unseen many years ago in the park, and founding on them an opinion that their mother is innocent, I shall desire you to take some trouble in finding out what is become of her; when we see you again you will have succeeded in your enquiries, and then what remains but that you should conduct us to her habitation?"

On the return of Lewis and Loretta to the Lodge every thing answered to the plans and wishes of these wise projectors, those tender guardians of their happiness. Lewis became attached to Sir William, and Sir William could never take his tearful eyes from Lewis, but to fix them on the captivating Loretta; when he would sometimes fall into such excruciating reveries, as often quite disconcerted Mrs. Osmond, left

he might betray the sentiments which, for all their sakes, ought to be concealed.

Sir William having accepted an apartment in the Lodge, his constant intercourse with the children of Mary and Montgomery so strongly endeared them to his lacerated heart, that when their kind protectress carried the whole of her scheme into execution, and requested him to go in pursuit of their mother, though he could not refuse the commission, for fear she might accuse him of instability, he assented with grief, and tore himself from them with agony.

During the time he absented himself, which he passed shut up in the lodging occupied by him before his removal to the Lodge, Mrs. Osmond questioned Lewis how he should find his wishes incline, if a favourable opportunity offered to make him acquainted with foreign courts and foreign manners.

manners. The avidity with which he caught at the first idea, and the modest glow of prudent gratitude with which he relinquished it, convinced her that he had no other objection but such as proceeded from the fear of being too great an encroacher on her generosity ; having often before lamented, that, for his sake, she had already reduced the splendour of her establishment.

These bars to the ardour of his soul in the pursuit of knowledge, which would have led him over the extensive face of the globe, were soon removed by the address of his best friend, who told him that Sir William Jones, being ordered to try other climates for the restoration of health, had signified a desire that Lewis might be permitted to accompany him : “ so that, my dear, considerate child,” added she, “ do not suppose such a disposition will be attended with any inconvenience to me, for

Sir William, who is the most generous of mankind, will be your liberal, as well as your indulgent, protector."

Lewis could no longer contain the transports of his joy, whilst the beautiful vermillion which overspread the cheeks of Loretta turned to a deadly paleness; her meek eyes obscuring their brightness in tears, and the harmony of her voice obstructed. "Oh! brother," she exclaimed, clasping her hands together, "have you forgotten that our dear, dear father charged us never to separate? I love Sir William; but I do not love him so well as I love the memory of my father!"

Mrs. Osmond turned to hide the emotions she could not suppress, on hearing the names of Sir William and Montgomery so pathetically united together by the energetic orphan. The suddenness with which she averted her face alarmed the children
of

of her love ; in a moment they were both at her feet, embracing her hands, bathing them in tears, and soliciting pardon for the boldness of Loretta's presumption, which had made her daringly to oppose the will of her who had been to their distresses more than father, mother, friends, every thing !

Mrs. Osmond fondly raised, pressed them to her maternal bosom ; bid them be at peace with themselves, for they had not displeased her ; and afterwards, by arguments the most convincing, so far reconciled Loretta to the thoughts of parting with Lewis, that, when Sir William came back to the Lodge, she was not the last to testify her gratitude for his intentional goodness to her beloved brother.

The anxious son and daughter of Mary durst not venture to speak those thousand questions which their eloquent eyes put to Sir William concerning the success of his
enqui-

enquiries after their mother ; but Mrs. Osmond asking him, in plainer language, if he had learnt any tidings of the *fugitive*, they waited for his answer as if on its purport suspended their own existence.

It was not without unutterable confusion, though unobserved, except by Mrs. Osmond, that Sir William replied, some circumstances had occurred, which made him hope he should soon procure *certain* intelligence of some kind or other respecting the fate of her, in whose recovery so many affectionate hearts were interested.

His coadjutant felt rather surprised at this implied delay, because she expected, and that with all the eagerness of benevolent pity, immediately to have made trial what effect would be produced on the poor sufferer when held in the arms of her children ; but Sir William accounted for the procrastination of their plan, by honestly pleading

pleading his present want of strength to support such an interview. Indeed, his health was so much shaken, that Mrs. Osmond ceased to urge him on the subject; and promised that, instead of returning to Oxford, Lewis should be ready to attend him on his foreign tour whenever he called upon him. This obliging offer was seized on by Sir William with grateful avidity. He spoke that day before the young ones of his departure from Britain as near at hand; said he should pass one month in town, to arrange his affairs; afterwards intrude on Mrs. Osmond's hospitality for a few days; "and then," added he, "my good boy, you and I will see what can be gained by change of air, change of countries, and change of studies."

The handsome face of Lewis was illumined with pleasure. He kissed the hand of his new protector, and most gracefully gave to his feelings of gratitude the form
of

of expression so warm, so eloquent, as, in compassion to Sir William, Mrs. Osmond thought proper to shorten, by calling their attention to Loretta, whom she highly praised for the steadiness with which she could now sacrifice her own wishes to the improvement and advantage of her brother. —“ Ah ! my sweet faced girl,” continued she, “ do not disgrace my panegyric. When that tall boy is gone from us, I will love you more, if possible, than ever.”

“ Indeed,” cried Loretta, sily wiping off a tear which hung upon her cherub cheek, “ indeed, Madam, I will try—I will endeavour—but not to-day—I cannot be very chearful to-day—you know poor Lion is—— !

“ Yes, my dear, I know Lion died this morning ; but you should not weep for that, he is relieved from the burden of extreme age. He could no longer run by your side,
hear

hear your voice, or see your person ; lame, deaf, and blind, he has languished on his cushion more than twelve months. He has wanted for no care ; his death has not been hastened ; he has yielded his last breath to nature, and not to compulsion."

Lewis, fondly casting his arms round the neck of Loretta, promised to bring her the most beautiful dog he saw on his travels. " Oh, no," said she, smiling through her tears ; " I have been such a fool about poor, dear Lion, that I will never love a dog again so long as I live."

" For my part," cried Sir William, " I shall go to no quarter of Europe from which I will not select its best curiosities for the cabinet of my Lewis's lovely sister." — " And I," added Mrs. Osmond, " to amuse her in the absence of her brother, will make a visit to my daughter Acres ; she shall spend the next winter in London.
And

And will not the society of your friend Harriet, my love, compensate in some degree for the pain of *another* separation?"

Thus caressed—thus flattered—thus comforted—Loretta recovered her cheerfulness; but it was remarkable enough, particularly to Mrs. Osmond, that the thoughts of a London journey, which had awakened the vivacity of Loretta, seemed to depress the spirits of Lewis; but as she had not observed the crimson mantle which enveloped his manly countenance when she spoke of her grand-daughter, of course could draw no conclusion from that little circumstance.

The next week was productive of more than one event. Sir William set out for town. Mrs. Osmond, exulting in the rising fortunes of her amiable *protégées*, and always strictly observant to perform whatever she had once promised, began to prepare for her winter excursion, by the repurchase

purchase of as many horses, as, from motives of œconomy, she had before disposed of. To accomplish this reinstatement, her coachman with two grooms were ordered to attend all the markets and fairs till they had found four sober matches for the two shining blacks still retained in her service; and in the midst of so much important business, Daddy Brown, with his good wife mounted behind him on a scarlet pillion trimmed with broad silver lace, trotted up the park, giving great pleasure to the whole family; the greater, perhaps, for not being expected.

Lewis and Loretta immediately hurried their newly arrived visitors into the presence of their gentle benefactress, who took almost as much delight in seeing this honest, loving couple, as it gave to themselves.

These

These worthy people soon explained the occasion of their intrusion (as they modestly called it) at the Lodge. It was to pay their duty to their good Lady, and once more to behold the dearest objects of their love, before they set out for Ireland, whether they were summoned by a rich relation of Brown's, who, although he had never taken notice of him before, now on his sick bed sent to command their attendance in a manner which could not but give them room to expect that he intended to name them his heirs; yet they would not—they could not—go to meet their good fortune, they said, till they had seen their honoured mistress and the dear Orphans of Snowdon.

They staid only one night, and the next morning departed for Bristol, from whence they intended to take their passage to Dublin; Daddy Brown, in the adventure of
his

his monkies, knowing experimentally that ships are constantly passing from that port to the Shannon. Thus occupied was the first week of Sir William's absence from the Lodge.

The second week commenced in gloom, and almost ended in despair. Mrs. Osmond had early taken the precaution of inoculating her foundlings with great success, and she concluded they must have got over the measles before they fell into her hands, because that disorder had been frequently round the neighbourhood without their taking the infection; and nothing, perhaps, would have convinced her to the contrary, but seeing them both seized on the same day with strong symptoms of that too often fatal malady.

The physician and apothecary, who were immediately sent for, confirmed the apprehensions of Mrs. Osmond. The two patients

tients were put to bed. Loretta had them favourably, but Lewis was so ill, that, for a considerable time, his life appeared to be in extreme danger. Mrs. Osmond, during three days and as many nights, never quitted his pillow, except for a moment to look in upon Loretta, who, under the same tender cares from the kind-hearted Orchard, was doing very well, and had no idea but that her brother was quite in as fair a way as herself.

That delirium which attended the fever of Lewis made to Mrs. Osmond a full discovery of what she did not even suspect. His speech, though extremely muffled, and his articulation oppressed, betrayed to the attentive ear of his maternal nurse a secret, which, had reason been his friend, he would have guarded with his life.

When all eyes were closed in the sick chamber but her own and the poor invalid's,

lid's, her's wetted with tears, his glaring with distemper, he drew the burning hand which she retained in her's eagerly from her grasp, crying out—"Stand off, Loretta!—You are not my Loretta!—Harriet, I will not marry you!—Let go my hand, Miss Acres!—I love you, Harriet! but—hark!—Don't you see Mrs. Osmond?—For your life do not tell Mrs. Osmond!—Peace, Loretta!—I will die ten thousand deaths rather than seduce the affections of Mrs. Osmond's!—Well, well, say no more, Loretta!—Do not, do not thus hang about me, Harriet!—You must marry Melbourn!—I shall not be very miserable!—very, very miserable, if you will let me alone!—if you do not make me forfeit my honour!"

"Glorious youth!" softly whispered Mrs. Osmond, as she touched his scorching cheek with her lips; "there is more goodness in thy ravings than there is wisdom

dom in the studied orations of eloquence !
—Oh, but for this intruder, Melbourn, Harriet, *my* Harriet, might have been the faithful wife of thy affectionate bosom !— Now it cannot be ! Yet, dear and amiable Lewis, ever shall thy secret—even unknown to thyself—ever shall it be closed up in the breast of her to whom it has been involuntarily surrendered !” And so true was this most respectable woman to the silence for which she had pledged herself, that never after did her lips open upon the subject, though she would often talk with her heart, and teach it to weep for the disappointment of one; perhaps two amiable lovers. She knew of Harriet’s attachment to Loretta, and she thought it impossible for any girl, capable of discriminating in Lewis the charms of mind and person, to behold him with indifference ; though as to his having used the arts of love to ensnare her affections, of that, and most truly, she held him incapable.

By

By the time Sir William had finished his business in London the lovely Orphans of Snowdon were fully recovered from their indisposition, so that he found them in as good health, as high spirits, and as much beauty, as when he left them.

He had not been many hours returned to the Lodge before he contrived to obtain a private audience of Mrs. Osmond, to whom he reported all that he had done since he last saw her; and she who had never felt the passion of ambition, upon her own account, now gave it a welcome for the sake of Lewis, whilst she heard, with unequivocal pleasure, that his name had been given in to the minister, and that it would appear on the list of succession in the peerage on the next creation of barons.

“ I shall not,” said Sir William, with a smile in which melancholy seemed to triumph, “ I feel that I shall not long keep
VOL. II. H those

those honours from my adopted son, which must of necessity first devolve on myself: for *his* sake I wish to possess, for my *own* I do not care how soon I relinquish them."

"I must chide you, Sir," replied Mrs. Osmond, "for encouraging this sort of never dying despondence: however well it might agree with unatoned crimes, the reparation you have made to his children for the sorrows you occasioned their father, should appease the bitterness of self-condemnation."

"Their father!—their father!" repeated he:—"but their mother!—you say nothing of their mother, Madam!"

"Yes, her injuries are included. Have you not been the guardian of her honour?—Are you not the noble benefactor of her offspring?"

"Have

“ Have I not murdered her husband!—robbed her of her children!—destroyed her intellect! I have seen her in my way hither—Oh, what a flower have I blasted!—Oh, what a being have I annihilated!—Yet I will see her again. I have made up my mind, I will see her once more, in your presence—in the presence of Lewis and Loretta. Should her senses return—should she pardon me—I may then forgive myself—but never, never shall I know peace, so long as she continues the insensible memento of my cruel treachery!”

Mrs. Osmond, alarmed at his increasing disorder, now took more pains to dissuade him from the interview than she had before urged arguments to make him immediately try the experiment on which she rested the most sanguine expectations; but as she could not accomplish the one, neither could she effect the other. Sir William was now as determined to proceed, as before eager

to retreat ; and, at his earnest request, she undertook the task of informing her *protégées* that intelligence had been gained of their mother, tenderly to break the state in which she languished, and to promise they should be brought to her arms, accompanied by herself and Sir William, all of which she performed with so much address, that their tears of sorrow shed over the loss of a parent's senses were mingled with the sweet drops of joy that they should be allowed to cast themselves at her feet, to look upon, and to serve her, though she might not know or acknowledge them.

Any longer delay became impracticable, without risking a like misfortune to the children as had occurred to the mother ; and Mrs. Osmond only waited till her new coach horses were properly exercised for a few days, before she gratified their impatience, by fixing the hour of their departure.

The

The journey would have passed in solitary gloominess, but for the good sense and consoling powers of Mrs. Osmond, which, though in constant use, were not the worse for wear; when they arrived within a hundred yards of the neat sequestered cottage, where was deposited the empty casket from which the gem of reason had escaped.

At the corner of a green lane, turning out from the great road, Sir William, as had before been planned, ordered the coachman to stop; and having assisted Mrs. Osmond to alight from the carriage, leaning on his arm, he conducted her forwards, followed by the young people, who, totally engrossed by their own filial emotions, observed not those of horror that agitated their trembling leader, as he softly knocked at the door with the end of a stick, by which he supported his unsteady steps.

Presently a key turned in the lock, and a clean matronly woman made her appearance, of whom Sir William hesitatingly enquired after the health of his sister; saying, that he had prevailed on some others of her family to try what effect their unexpected presence might produce on her blank mind.

This declaration, together with the appellation of sister, must have very much astonished Lewis and Loretta, if Mrs. Osmond had not prepared them to regard the innocent imposition as the only practicable means by which Sir William could himself have been admitted, or gained for them a passport to the sight of their mother; so that, quite void of suspicion, they felt only grief, but felt it in the extreme, when, in answer to Sir William's question, the woman replied, that her dear Lady was as quiet as ever, but, by what she could see, her strength for some days had been on the decline

decline; because, when led into the air, instead of walking as she used to do, now she sat down on the grass, where for whole hours she would pull daisies, and throw them away, without looking at or caring for them. Then opening the door of a pretty parlour, she begged they would be pleased to look out at the window, and convince themselves that she had been telling them no untruths.

Mrs. Osmond, taking the hands of her young friends, advanced to the window: she saw Lewis's eyes fill with tears; she felt Loretta's face recline on her bosom, whilst Sir William, silently falling into a chair, kept himself in the back ground.

“Dear children of unfortunate parents,” said Mrs. Osmond, “reserve your transports to aid the motive for which I have brought you hither. See where your mother sits in loveliness supreme, but divested

of mental intelligence! Go to her, my loves; cast yourselves into her arms; tell her you are her children!—her own Lewis!—her own Loretta! And God give his blessing to your endeavours.

They waited for no other permission, but flew to the little garden. Their words could not be heard, yet their actions fully displayed to the entranced senses of their benefactors (for Sir William as well as Mrs. Osmond was now surveying them from the window) that nature was exerting her whole resources to combat the dreadful usurper Insensibility, which had so long set up her throne in the heart of a tender mother!

Well might Mrs. Osmond say as she did to the children of her adoption—"See where your mother sits, in loveliness supreme!" Had there been any stronger phrase by which to express her admiration,
it

it is probable she would have used it. The beautiful blank, with her head hanging on her bosom, reclined upon the green, employing her taper fingers, as described by the nurse, in plucking the tops of grass and buds of daisies, which she afterwards dropped from her hands with the same vacancy she had pulled them. Wrapped in a loose white calico robe, neither attitude or inanimation could rob her figure of those elegant graces which belong to the most finished works of proportion. Her features were the features of Loretta; but, like Loretta's, they were not illumined by rays of the soul's divinity!

“Can you behold, Madam,” cried Sir William with energy, “can you look on this once perfect creature, now so defaced, so mutilated! and not renounce all communication with her destroyer?”

The eyes of Mrs. Osmond were suffused with tears—her voice suffocated with sighs; she pressed the hand of Sir William with friendly compassion, and, imperceptibly, drew him nearer to the scene, which had too much awaked their sensibility when contemplated at a distance, to make her apprehend that it could receive any augmentation by becoming actors, instead of remaining spectators.

“It will not do!” cried Sir William, and turned back. Mrs. Osmond proceeded, and stood by the side of the affectionate little family, just in time to catch the fainting Loretta in her arms, who, overpowered by their ill success to redeem the senses of their interesting parent, was sinking down insensible by her side; whilst Lewis, now on his knees, now almost as much a statue as his mother, with arms folded, eying the ruin of remorseless fate as if his aching
fight

fight was never to be satisfied with gazing on the beautiful vision !

Mrs. Osmond judging this first interview, which had been attended with no favourable symptom, had already lasted too long for the tranquillity of her *protégées*, hurried them from a spot they never would have quitted, but for those sweet commands, which to have resisted must have involved their grateful souls in all the torments of disobedience ; but whilst they promised submission to the will of their benefactress, they hung upon the neck of their senseless mother, calling upon her to hear them, and covering her face with tears and kisses.

Sir William reconducted them to the carriage, and seemed to breathe with greater freedom as he lost sight of the cottage and advanced towards Bristol, where Mrs. Osmond had promised the disconsolate Orphans of Snowdon they should reside

a week or a fortnight, at their own option, and every day revisit their mother. This was a cordial concession, which very much attuned their minds to composure, and in some degree renovated their depressed spirits.

Not so the penitent betrayer of innocence, whose soul was every moment liable to be pierced by the questions of those very children, who looked up to the destroyer of their family as their own particular friend, and whose grateful attentions conveyed the bitterest reproaches. His melancholy visibly gained ground after they entered the house, which had been hired at Clifton for the reception of Mrs. Osmond and her party.

The two ladies being gone to look at their apartments, and Lewis left alone with Sir William, he began, as was extremely natural, to talk of his mother. "Oh!
Sir,

Sir," said the graceful youth, raising to his lips the hand of his benefactor, " what is there of gratitude that my sister and I are not indebted to your goodness in procuring for us the sight of our unhappy parent?—How sweet, yet how sad, the indulgence!"

" Unhappy, indeed!" repeated the quivering lips of Sir William; " but not one half so miserable as the wretch whose vices forced her from the arms of your father—robbed her of her children—obliterated memory—and abolished reason for ever!"

" Alas! Sir, a man who could *act* thus would not *speak* as you do, or feel his crimes in the manner *you* suppose he feels them."

" He spared the honour of your mother."

" Are

“Are you certain, Sir, that he did spare it?—so some person, unseen, told us in the park; so Mrs. Osmond has often assured us. But are you, Sir-William, who have so nobly interested yourself in making the discovery of her abode, are *you* sure that the villain who blasted her senses did not insult her virtue?”

“Never, Lewis! Never has your mother’s person been insulted. I know her seducer—he is not quite abandoned—quite transformed to a monster! He is penitent—his heart weeps tears of blood! I know him—but his secret is my own—I dare not reveal it—yet, in his name, I call on God to witness, that, to my own certain knowledge, his villainy ended with the capture of her person, and that the purity of your much-injured mother is inviolate.”

“Then may God pardon him for all his other offences,” exclaimed Lewis:—“all,
all

all but the contamination of a parent's honour a son may forgive !”

“ Generous young man !”——The return of Mrs. Osmond with Loretta put a stop, and not a reluctant one, to what Sir William might have added. The change in his countenance did not pass unobserved by the repositer of his confidence ; and the first moment they were alone together he succinctly related the whole conversation which had passed between Lewis and him ; declaring he would not go through such another excruciating trial to be exempted from all the bodily complaints under which he laboured.

Sir William was so unwell the following morning, that Mrs. Osmond would not permit his attendance, but went without him to the cottage, leaving the carriage where it had waited the preceding day ; and striking into the lane, unfollowed by
any

any servant, walked up to the door, which was again opened by the same attendant as they had already seen, yet with so different an aspect, as inspired them with hope before she had time to say—"Oh, Madam, I am glad you are come once more, and have brought those young gentlefolks with you. I have seen—God be praised!—I have seen a change for the better since you was here yesterday."

"How!—when!—what!" asked they all, in a breath, or rather breathless themselves. "Has she spoke—has she moved—has she shewn any return of recollection?"

"She has spoke," said the old dame, "which is the first time I have ever heard the found of her dear voice."

"Blessed woman!" cried Loretta.

"Soul-

“ Soul-healing comforter !” said Lewis ; whilst Mrs. Osmond desired she would proceed with her happy intelligence.

“ I do not know, an’t please your ladyship, that ever I was so frightened in my life as when the poor, dear soul, just after you were gone away, burst out a crying ; and then laughing afterwards, she said two words, but I did not understand their meaning ; and since then she has been pretty much as usual ; yet I do think it, my Lady, a good sign, for all that.”

“ Certainly,” replied Mrs. Osmond :—
“ but let us try if our presence may not again revive this kindly spark of sensibility !”

Alas ! the experiment was made, but did not answer. They found the beautiful maniac sitting in the little parlour, her back against the wall, her eyes immoveably fixed

fixed on the carpet, and her arms hanging, like those of a dead person, close on either side; nor could all the caresses of her children, or all the efforts of Mrs. Osmond, gain upon her attention, or make any change in her attitude. She suffered them to take up her hands, to hold them to their bosoms, to wash them with their burning tears; but when they ceased to support them, they fell down to their former position: yet, in spite of their recent disappointment, at the end of two hours they left her, if not much enriched by hope, neither quite impoverished by despair.

Sir William's joy, at the unexpected relation brought home to him by the young people, and confirmed by Mrs. Osmond, was mingled with so much bitterness of retrospection, such convulsive fears that all his crimes would be unmasked the first time she should see him on the liberation of her senses, and that, in the true light of her oppressor,

oppressor, he must infallibly become odious to the now dearest objects of his affection—the orphan descendants of Montgomery—that the contrary emotions, all acting at once upon his debilitated frame, so greatly increased the hectic symptoms of decline, for which he had been ordered to travel, that Mrs. Osmond, alarmed at his condition, prevailed on him, without much difficulty, to embark with Lewis on board a merchant ship bound to the Levant, and which would sail out of the port of Bristol in two days.

These two days were passed by Lewis and Loretta at the feet of their insensible mother; and whilst they wept their own approaching separation from each other, they fancied their tears were only flowing for the lamentable state of a suffering parent.

Mrs.

Mrs. Osmond permitted them to visit the cottage without her ; glad to employ the hours of their absence in trying to heal the wounded heart of Sir William ; and this arduous task, in some measure, she effected, not only by adducing the strongest arguments why he ought to be reconciled to his own conscience, but by promising, that, as long as he should think it necessary to continue on the continent, she would take upon herself the tender guardianship of Montgomery's unfortunate widow : adding, that the better to discharge her office, and to gratify the filial duty of Loretta, she intended, with his leave, to call in her way from the capital, and remove the invalid, with her good old attendant, to her own residence.

“ I shall,” said she, “ tell the sweet girl what I now propose to you ; but, for all our sakes, I think it highly proper her gentle mind should first be relieved from
the

the sorrows which have lately oppressed it, and from those she will experience at parting with her brother, by a little knowledge of the world, a little innocent participation in its pleasures; and by this post I mean to inform my daughter Acres that, in three weeks, she may expect us in London."

Stubborn must that self-willed grief have been which could have longer contended against such strong forces of gracious commiseration and soothing strains of humanity! The voice of Mrs. Osmond sounded in the ears of Sir William like the voice of heaven! He blessed her, and was himself comforted.

To say, and to do, had never but one meaning with this excellent woman. Loretta felt less at parting with Lewis, by knowing she should hereafter be the constant companion of her mother; yet that *less* amounted, perhaps, to more real woe on

on both sides than ever before marked the separation of brother and sister, because few have been bound by any ties stronger than those of blood; those of similar virtues, those of similar misfortunes, had much more firmly united the souls of Lewis and Loretta.

Mrs. Osmond's motives for visiting Lady Acres so many months antecedent to the commencement of winter, were founded on the present situation of affairs. She was advancing into the vale of years; and she had also advanced as far as Bristol in her way to the metropolis; so that, one consideration balancing the other, something remained on the side of proceeding, rather than undergo the fatigues of twice again remeasuring the same road through which she had travelled at the call of charity; besides that, by this arrangement Loretta would sooner be solacing in the duteous office of nurse to a disabled mother

ther than if their journey had been delayed to a later period, for on their return from London, and not before, Mrs. Osmond had determined the ill-fated parent should become a part of her family at the Lodge.

Loretta, who dearly loved Miss Acres, more dearly perhaps than she was beloved by any other body, Lewis excepted, was subject to a violent contest between the pleasure of meeting her, and pain at parting, even for a few months, with her new-found treasure, which, miser like, she would have contemplated without satiety, though useless to its owners, to others, and to itself.

Whatever were her mental struggles, Loretta did not oppose them to the will of her revered benefactress, who had now the goodness to go with her every day to the cottage, during three weeks that they staid at Bristol, to watch if one more spark of reason

reason may not rekindle in the dark abode of vacancy. Alas ! for this blessing they waited in vain ; and Lady Acres having written to her mother, to say every thing was prepared for her reception in town, she did not protract her journey, but told the attendant in presence of her insensible charge, on the day before their departure, that she was going to take Loretta with her for a few months to London, and in her way home should call for the poor invalid, as well as herself, to carry them to her own residence, where they would be taken better care of than in their solitary cottage.

When Loretta, for the last time, pressed the insensible form of her mother, and laid her warm glowing lips to the cold faded cheeks of maternal inanimation, the agonies of her soul were not to be disguised.—Her filial emotions extremely affected Mrs. Osmond ;—they did more—the eyes of the beautiful statue moved in their sockets, and
seemed

seemed as if trying for the language of expression. But, ah ! it was the flash of a moment ! In another instant they were fixed stronger than ever. They staid by her side many hours without being cheered by a second insignia from the throne of reason.

I have heard of *knowing* people, who will tell you by a specimen of penmanship, whether finely traced with a crow quill, or rough drawn like what is vulgarly called the Devil's Writing, in St. John's College, the very soul and temper of the scribe ; but, in my opinion, the Mind shews her features much plainer by the contents of an epistle than by the ciphers which convey them. For stile, sentiment, and discrimination, we are indebted to nature ; for the cut of our letters, to education ; so that what we possess of ourselves belong to ourselves ; but those good or bad qualities which are to be distinguished in the stroke

of a pen, must as certainly belong to our writing-masters.

Lady Acres was remarkable for writing a fine hand; for pure orthography, for chaste diction, always correct, because always studied; and, above all, for spreading sentiment on paper, the application of which causing no irritation, of course could effect no great operation on the soul of sensibility, which will be more touched with one message from the heart than a thousand from the head.

In answer to Mrs. Osmond's annunciation of an early visit, her Ladyship's whole letter *flamed* with tenderness; but the warmth of her expressions did not extend to Loretta: of her she only said, that she could sleep with her woman, whom she could also assist in making preparations for the marriage of Miss Acres, which would take place as soon as Mr. Melbourn arrived;

rived ; and the young people had been introduced to each other.

Genuine was the joy of Harriet, and extreme the pleasure testified by Lady Acres, at seeing her excellent mother, *allowing only for its want of stability* ; for, even in the very first moments of their meeting, her thoughts were diverted from what she called her supreme happiness by a thousand little domestic cares, which might with propriety have been deferred to another season—such as ringing violently first for one servant, then for another : *this* was determined to tire her by his carelessness ; the flowers which cost her so much in Covent Garden but yesterday were dying for want of water ; *that* had displaced her workbasket—now rising to brush off a fly which had innocently taken its station on a picture—and now wiping with her own cambric handkerchief something she fancied to be dust from the face of a mirror—
till,

till, at last, Mrs. Osmond, more wearied by this sort of trifling than by the fatigue of travelling, went to take some repose before dinner, supported on one hand by her grand-daughter, and on the other by her foundling; saying to Lady Acres, who offered to accompany her to her bed-chamber, "No, my dear; I shall at present, in consideration of your many family employments, dispense with your attendance: these good children shall be your substitutes till we meet at table."

To this so gently-intended rebuke Lady Acres, mistaking it for a particular indulgence, replied—"My dear Madam, you are always so kind, so considerate—I have, to be sure, enough on my hands, and shall as long as negligent servants are in the world, for so long they will be *my* torment! But, pray, let me attend you."

"By

“ By no means, my dear——Give my love to Sir John, if he should come home before I am visible.”

Sir John Acres, in compliment to his expected guest, came home that day sooner than usual. We have said, in a former part of our history, that he was a good-humoured man: his understanding might not be of the first rate, but his heart was open, kind, and liberal; and had his wife's disposition better suited to his own, he, of all mankind, would have delighted the most in chearful domestication; that is to say, if the society he loved could have been collected under his own roof with as much ease as under any other; but that the formality of his lady rendered impossible.

Next to precision Lady Acres doated on shew; two of the greatest enemies social conviviality has to contend with, for which

reason it is a marvel to meet them together.

When the mistress of a family sits freezing at the head of her table, I mean with a freezing countenance, the chill is apt to circulate round it; wit stagnates, conversation limps, and pleasantry falls asleep in the cradle of ceremony.

Frequent were the dinners, or rather the lullaby parties, at which Lady Acres presided; but as neither cards, dance, or song, were called upon to fill up the vacant evening hours, and *petits soupés* being quite out of her Ladyship's invariable plans of entertainment; as soon, therefore, as coffee had brought up the rear of all other good things, Sir John, rather than put his wife out of her straight line, would adjourn with the gentlemen who happened to be his guests at dinner to sup with them at a tavern,

vern, where, at a very great expence, and considerable losses at play, he would convince them that what they found deficient in the warmth of hospitality from whence they came had no part in his nature, and ought not to be charged to his account.

Lady Acres having thus got rid of her gentlemen visitors, it follows of course that the departure of her lady friends was at no great distance; it being pretty well understood that we never labour at our toilets to catch the admiration of one another; nor, were such dinners given every day, should we be under the terrible necessity of toiling to so little purpose, whilst so many box doors stand invitingly open to receive distressed maids, wives, and widows, of this description.

Another of Lady Acres' peculiarities must not be passed over in silence, considering such communications in the light

beacons, which may teach my readers how to steer clear of the shoals and quicksands often fatal to matrimonial happiness. It was always the custom of her Ladyship, when Sir John withdrew to clubs or taverns, and her company were all departed, to wait his return, in full dress, till three, four, sometimes till five or six o'clock in the morning; at all times he was sure to find her a fixture in her dressing-room, either working or reading. Her words did not reproach his irregularities, but he fancied he saw it in her looks, and was sure he *felt* it in her presence.

At first he tried to dissuade her from such unseasonable hours, for her own sake, as they could not but be injurious to a young lady who had never been used to any other than the regular ones observed in most country houses. To which she would reply, that they would be no worse for her than for himself.

He

He went again to the tavern, and she to her needle. Afterwards he had recourse to various others means to conquer her ridiculous propensity for watching; still she was incorrigible. At last, being quite out of patience with her obstinacy, he did not come home for several nights, but when his party broke up walked about the parks till he knew she was, with all due order, placed at the breakfast table. It was then he would join her in perfect good-humour, yet refuse to give any account of where or how he had passed the night; neither did he enquire how she had disposed of herself.

At length the resentment she struggled to conceal vented its force in accusations of his intending utterly to destroy her constitution, by compelling her to sit up three nights running, when, if he had but told her he did not mean to come home, there would have been no occasion for her making him such a sacrifice.

“ My dear creature,” said Sir John, “ it is to preserve your constitution, for which I have the sincerest tenderness, that I give you this *just* cause of complaint. When I find you do not endanger your health by any superfluous accommodation to the hours I keep, my reformation is at hand ; but never shall I be more regular until you set me the example.”

She did set him the example ; from which time they have lived in as much harmony as can be supposed when two extremes are united : her pleasures were all domestic, his foreign ; her business to save, his to squander ; her delight to torment, his to live quiet himself, and not to disturb the quiet of others.

In affection to their amiable daughter they both agreed, but in the mode of evincing it, again they divided. Sir John praised every thing Harriet said or did ; his
Lady

Lady found fault with every thing done or said by Harriet : one fearing *discouragement* might hurt her spirits, the other that *encouragement* might make her assuming ; so that she would inevitably have been uncomfortably situated, when she saw herself a bone of contention between two parents whom she loved and honoured, if she had not, as she grew towards womanhood, been happily spared from that misfortune by her father's consideration for his own peace, which made him confine his fondness to private interviews, and all his little tokens of liberality to absolute silence.

The intended marriage was entirely a work of the mother's, to which the father could see no objections ; or if he had seen any, it is odds that he would not have been at the trouble of contending them. The young lady herself was the only person dissatisfied : the alliance was, in her estimation, far from desirable ; and the mode of

its being proposed offensive to her delicacy. Besides all these obstructions to her heart, there was a sweet pensive recollection of Lewis, whose image barred it against all intruders *known* or *unknown*. She did not so much as suspect what might be his opinion of her; but the partiality of her sentiments for him, though concealed even from his sister, was decisive.

Sir John Acres discovered much satisfaction in the new acquisition to his family party: Mrs. Osmond, the most chearful as well as most excellent of women; Loretta, the fortunate copieſt of all her graces, all her virtues, with a face reſplendent in lovelineſs, a form ſhaped by proportion, animated by vivacity; how was it poſſible ſuch inducements ſhould not give him a higher reliſh for home than any of which he had yet been ſenſible; or who will wonder that he now found no place ſo pleaſant as his home? or that he ſhould ſeek, by
every

every means in his power, to obtain amusement for those to whom he was so much indebted for his own, which he frequently acknowledged to be the most pleasing, as well as the most rational, he had ever before experienced ?

The season happened to be peculiarly favourable to his pursuits, for though summer was far advanced the town was still full of the best company. He gave balls himself, and conducted the ladies to others given by his friends. He escorted them to Richmond, Windsor, and through all the little fashionable excursions adopted by the *ton*, who prefer an artificial winter in London to the clear atmosphere of a country residence, many of whom only know when it is summer by the flowers contained in their vases.

These multiplying parties were not quite to the taste of Mrs. Osmond, yet she con-
formed

formed to them on account of Loretta, to whom such scenes had the charm of novelty, although by no means that of captivity; for when she should have been listening to the sounds of vocal harmony, she was thinking on the melancholy silence that involved the fate of her mother. If she danced, the same idea pervaded her imagination: she saw her sitting on the grass-plat, or, statue-like, fixed to her chair in the small cottage parlour! Then would her heart beat—her steps falter—the figure be forgotten—and nothing remembered but the image her reflections had conjured up.

The young men who followed her every where, to testify their admiration and excite her attention, failed to excite it, because she could not find any thing in their persons or manners which bore the faintest resemblance to Lewis; neither the modest reserve with which she received their compliments,

pliments, when she could not escape their troublesome assiduities, neither the anxiety she evinced to escape from them, preserved her from becoming, more than ever, the object of Lady Acres' dislike, not to say aversion, who meanly feared for the heart of her son-in-law elect, if he should chance to arrive before her mother should be inclined to convey this formidable beauty back to the shades of Devonshire.

At first she determined to put the unoffending orphan on the footing of an humble companion; but this design she had more than one reason for changing. Loretta was too handsome to occupy so near a vicinity to the person of Harriet, who, though pleasing beyond the powers of description, was by no mean a regular beauty; and Mrs. Osmond treated her with so much tenderness, that her Ladyship had good reason to suppose any marked disrespect shewn to her favourite would
not

not pass unresented; especially as she could hope for no assistance in her plan of humiliation either from Sir John or Miss Acres, whom, she would often complain to her woman, seemed to be quite as much infatuated with the little beggar-girl as Mrs. Osmond herself.

Thus obliged to confine the rankling worm of jealousy to the precincts of her own bosom, a decent civility presided in her conduct towards Loretta, whilst she contented herself with giving private lectures to Harriet, on the impropriety of forming intimacies with inferior girls, picked up nobody knew how, come from nobody knew where, and were made into gentlewomen nobody knew why.

Miss Acres always listened to her mother's documents with filial submission.— Her remonstrances in favour of Loretta were often forcible, never offensive: sometimes

times they extracted a smile, more frequently produced a frown, and never ended without severe commands to avoid entering into any childish, romantic friendship with the *protégées* of her grandmother.

Mr. Melbourn had not yet appeared.— His mother was a well-bred woman, but haughty, and of whom Harriet seemed to stand in as much awe as of her own mother. As to Loretta, she came in for no share of her notice, Lady Acres having poisoned the mind of her friend with the same suspicions as she entertained respecting the danger of her son, should he return whilst that fascinating girl continued to make a part of her family; and it actually was by the contrivance of these managing ladies that the arrival of Mr. Melbourn had been protracted, his mother having written to request he would lengthen his stay at Paris until she should inform him that his presence at home was necessary; and

and, so little predilection had he for commencing benedict, that he readily fell in with every stipulation favourable to delay.

Mrs. Osmond had entered into the tenth week of her visit, when she received very satisfactory and affectionate letters from Sir William Jones and Lewis, as also did Loretta from the latter, the contents of which she only shewed to the gentle Harriet, in the triumph of joy, without observing that she did not monopolize the whole of its influence; a discovery she might have soon made, had she looked for its symptoms in the sparkling eyes and glowing cheeks of her agitated confidant.

Loretta, at the end of another fortnight, heard, with transports, the commands of her benefactress to prepare for their removal to the dear Lodge in four days; nor did Lady Acres exert many efforts to detain them; declaring, if her beloved mother

ther would not consent to stay the whole winter, she should be miserable to have her protract her long journey to a later season, the days being already too short, and the roads too much broken, to make travelling either very safe, or very pleasant.

Sir John would have pleaded on the contrary side to his wife, but he saw that it must be to no purpose.

Miss Acres did plead, but received so sweet a denial, as at once silenced her importunities, and consoled her for the sorrows of approaching separation, which was to be followed by a visit from the whole family on the subsequent summer; "when," said her Ladyship, "we shall bring an additional relation, whose merit will ensure his welcome."

Harriet sighed; but being a philosopher in the government of her passions, she
made

made no reply to the insinuation, which, nevertheless a little alarmed her; for though she had made up her mind that her heart and hand should never be divided, either by authority or persuasion, yet was she as fully determined patiently to wait the arrival of Algernon Melbourn, to see him without prejudice; to consider her attachment to Lewis as a girlish impression, utterly impossible ever to meet the approbation of her parents, of course deserving her best endeavours to eradicate, and never to raise it as a bar against treating with respect any person who came recommended by them to her choice: concession greater than this she thought neither duty or prudence could exact.

Would all young ladies adopt the same medium between madly pursuing a first imprudent or ill-fated prepossession, and yet preserve to themselves the freedom of sacrificing the rights of inclination at the shrine

shrine of avarice or indiffence, how much of misery and repentance might be spared the thoughtless, the giddy, the romantic beings, who, perhaps, at some time of their lives have been in the situation of Harriet Acres, without practising her lesson of self-dominion ?

Let no slumbering mortal dream that their cup of life is so filled to the brink with sweets, that no room remains for any infusion of bitters : such dreamers, if such there are, must awake to disappointment ; and to such will the nauseous draught be more unpalatable than to those whose expectations are more rational, and who receive, with equanimity of soul, all, whether good or evil, which is presented to them by the hand of unerring Providence.

Loretta, on the eve of leaving London, counted amongst her choicest felicities, present and in future, the apparent good health

health of her patroness, and her speedy reunion to a parent whom the ties of blood and the visitation of God had doubly endeared to her affections. "Ah!" cried she, "how soon now will the delightful task be mine to attend her steps, to sleep by her side, to watch the first dawning of reanimated reason! Happy, happy Loretta!" she had almost said, in the fulness of her heart, "thy cup of blessings is full, and the return of a mother's senses will make it run over!"

Let us see what was the foundation of those fond expectations; and let us also admire, if possible imitate, that dignified Christian fortitude which enabled the young, the beautiful, the sanguine daughter of Montgomery mildly to resign her fairest prospects, and with submissive courage emerge from the shrine of prosperity into the gloom of adversity!

I should

I should rather any pen but mine were employed to sketch the outlines of Fortune's sad reverse ; or that any heart less susceptible than my own were to fill them up with the colouring of sensibility !—severe the task !—severer the feelings which must attend the adventurous artist who boldly dares the undertaking !

Mrs. Osmond, finding Loretta was intended to share the bed of her daughter's woman, had, to screen her from an arrangement so humiliating, without breaking in on Lady Acres' convenience, signified a wish that she might sleep on a small pallet by the side of her own, to which her Ladyship more readily consented, because, in making the request, her mother had placed her *protégée* in the very light she desired ever to behold her. She had said Loretta must be near her person by night as well as by day, being at a loss what to do without the attendance of her little hand-

hand-maiden : a phrase meant in fondness, but construed into an expression of servitude, and which Lady Acres did not fail to whisper through the large circle of her acquaintance, that the young person which she brought about with her had been bred up with the view of succeeding to the office of her mother's *femme de chambre*, but had the art to gain so much on her mistress's affection, that she would go no where without her ; " and this must be," she would add, " my apology for bringing her into circles, to mix with which she has no other pretension than my mother's partiality, who is so excellent a woman (but for this one error in judgment), so truly entitled to my respectful duty, that there is no condescension I could not make, even to this one only weakness, rather than she should be contradicted or offended by my interfering with a whim, which, it must be acknowledged, is wonderfully unaccountable."

Such

Such were always the comments of her Ladyship; and nobody can doubt but that the effect produced by them threw the sister of Lewis pretty distant in the back ground of fashionable associations.

In the fullest confidence that her happiness would commence on the morrow, Loretta, lively as a lark, for the last time attended Mrs. Osmond to her chamber; and, whilst her servant put on the night-cloaths of the good Lady, with her friend the amiable Harriet, sat beside her toilet, entertaining her with that sort of sweet prattle which may not deserve the name of conversation, yet ought to be ranked amongst those agreeable nothings which are a thousand times more interesting.

The clock struck one before the little affectionate party separated, when Loretta, being left alone with her adored protectress, opened the side curtain (as was always her

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custom), knelt down by her bed, to receive the embrace and the blessing, without which her repose would have been robbed of its sweetest comfort.

“ God bless you, my love !” said Mrs. Osmond ; “ for ever bless the darling child of my heart !—and God bless our dear Lewis !——So now we will go to rest ; but take care that you do not let me sleep too long in the morning.”

Loretta's thoughts were so agreeably employed on her approaching change of situation, with the delightful consequences attendant on her removal to the country, that it was a very long time before her spirits were enough composed to admit of that profound stillness which is generally the forerunner of sleep ; but no sooner had it seized on her senses than they were again roused by a deep-drawn sigh, which seemed to issue from the bed of Mrs. Osmond, and

and made that of Loretta tremble under her as if it had been shaken by an earthquake.

Without knowing by what unformed fears her whole frame was thus agitated, she started from her pillow, sat upright, looked round the room, watched, listened, —but neither saw or heard any thing:—all was silent but her own unappeased apprehensions. She stepped from her low couch, walked to the chimney, caught up a pierced lanthorn which contained the glimmering rush-light, and with an unsteady hand advanced it almost close to the face of her anxiously beloved Lady, who, with joy equal to what her terrors had been, she saw had not so much as changed the position in which she left her, and returning to her own bed, afterwards slept so soundly as not to awaken till called upon, in a whispering voice, by the servant, to tell her it was near eight o'clock, and to

ask, if she did not please to get up a little before it was necessary to disturb her own mistress.

Though sorry to be roused from a dream the most flattering to her affections, which represented her two mothers, one by nature, the other by adoption, both young, both more beautiful than reality ever brought to the vision of her sight, and both spreading their arms to invite her to their bosoms; yet Loretta, with all her reluctance to separate from the shadow, gaily arose to meet, as she supposed, the very substance of happiness.

The foundress of this expected happiness was the first object to engage her attention. She peeped through the curtain, still she saw Mrs. Osmond in the same posture, and still sleeping so sweetly, that, after making herself ready, she took a station near the bed, and would not permit that

Mrs.

Mrs. Osmond should be awakened until she gave some indication of stirring; saying, the chocolate might as well be brought to her chamber before she dressed, which, altogether, would take up no more time than whilst the horses were putting to; and to this resolution she adhered till Lady Acres, accompanied by Harriet, came up to see what had become of the travellers, for whom breakfast had been long waiting.

Lady Acres declared herself displeased with the caution—the tender caution—of Loretta; and bidding her recollect how much her mother would be disappointed in the disposition of her time by this officious delay, threw open the curtains, crying out, in a voice of fretfulness, “My dear Madam, I am sorry to disturb you; but these creatures would, I believe, have let you sleep to eternity, if I had not come to enliven their indolence.”

They

They would let you sleep to eternity!—
Ah! that a sentence pronounced in sport should have already received the awful *fiat* of tremendous fate! It had sealed up those eyes for ever, the opening of which was so anxiously expected! Already was the body of Mrs. Osmond reposing behind the dark curtain of eternity!—already was her pure soul flown to the bosom of that Saviour by whose blood it had been purified!—and the sigh which alarmed Loretta must have been that which wafted her spirit to a bright heaven of recompense!

“Indeed she does sleep very sound,” said Lady Acres, after repeating her summons more than once, without hearing her speak, or seeing her move. “What can be the matter, I wonder? I hope nobody has presumed to make her swallow any thing of a composing nature without consulting *me*, and without the advice of *my* physician!”

“Ah!

“ Ah !” cried Loretta, “ I have never in my life, Madam, seen my dear Lady take any sort of medicine ; her sleep therefore must be refreshing, because it is certainly natural.”

Lady Acres now gently touched the hand of her mother, which lay extended on the coverlid, whilst her death-clad cheek rested on the other : then drawing suddenly back, declared it was impossible she could be well, her skin was so cold, and so altogether uncomfortable !

Loretta and Miss Acres, shocked by the bare idea of any indisposition falling on the dearest object of their love and reverence, eagerly advanced, but were commanded with severity to stand back, that the air might freely circulate ; saying, if they must busy themselves, they would do well to throw up the windows, and not

crowd about a sick bed, which, for its closeness, was already quite suffocating!

Mrs. Osmond's servant had caught up a bottle of hartshorn, and whilst the young ladies opened the sashes she passed her arm under her mistress's neck to lift her head from the pillow, but, letting it fall again, she exclaimed—"Oh, Almighty God! my Lady, my dear Lady is dead!—stiff dead!"

Gentle reader, would you desire more of this terrible scene?—Ah, no!—your heart and mine must be made of the same materials:—what, for tears, I cannot write, you, from sympathy, would not be able to read! For your sake, then, as well as my own, we will pass over in silence the most wretched scene of Loretta's life!—the day on which she lost what was dearer to her than life!—a day that again reduced her to a worse than her first orphan state!—a day

day, so dark, so terrible, as no ray of hope could penetrate!

Lady Acres was, or affected to be, in such extreme agonies of sorrow, as to draw the attention of Sir John, Harriet, even of Loretta, from every other object, to fix it on herself. One hysteric fit succeeded to another; so that, till late in the evening, the chamber of death was deserted by every body but just the people necessary to attend the body, and perform the due offices of preparation.

Affliction seemed to have softened the heart of Lady Acres in favour of the poor Loretta: as often as she would have slid from her apartment to visit the precious remains of her more than parent, her Ladyship, whether in or out of her hysterics, would detain her by force; she could not bear to lose sight of the sweet girl so beloved by her fainted mother! Even Har-

riet was less distinguished by the violence of her fondness than was the harrowed daughter of Montgomery. Incapable of answering these wonderful tokens of new-born partiality by any other mode than passive obedience, she sat for several hours immovable by her side, like another Niobe, dissolved in tears, and scarcely more animated than the beautiful maniac of the cottage, except that her hands were clasped together, and her eloquent eyes cast up to heaven, with woe so expressive, that, more than once, the good-humoured Sir John had made some efforts to draw her from his wife's chamber, together with Harriet, whose grief was only inferior to Loretta's, because in losing one tender parent she did not lose *all*; still she had parents, friends, fortune!—Loretta's *all* was gone! No parents!—no friends!—no fortune!—no protection!—no hope remained to Loretta!

When-

Whenever Sir John proposed that the two lovely mourners should go with him either to the garden, or at least to a more distant apartment, Lady Acres would scream so violently, as made it inconsistent with his compassion, as a husband, as well as a double tax on his indolence, to oppose any longer his own will to the will of his wife, but, heartily tired of being himself an actor in the tragedy, he retired to another room, and finding her Ladyship very much recovered, the next morning, by her persuasion, he set out for his estates in Northumberland, where he had business that would detain him some months, and where he was expected, having appointed to begin his journey on the same day that the accident happened in his family, which unavoidably detained him.

As long as Sir John continued in the house, so long Lady Acres never lost sight of Loretta. She fancied he might, in the

fulness of humanity, offer her a more independent patronage than suited with her own frost-bitten plans of generosity; that he would either make her a decent provision, to the disadvantage of her daughter's fortune, or give her an establishment in his family on the same footing enjoyed by her during the life time of Mrs. Osmond; a situation equally threatening to the many *real*, yet inferior, charms of her daughter.

With Sir John vanished all the fears, all the cares, and all the artificial kindness Lady Acres had entertained on the score of Loretta, who was now so much the mistress of her time, as to dedicate the whole of it, without intermission, where her sorrowing soul could indulge in the luxury of sadness only to be perfected by the side of that cold corpse, once animated with an eternal love for the children of her charity, and in contemplating happiness past, and misery which the future might conceal.

Amongst

Amongst the dark catalogue of *possibles*, there was none which weighed down her gentle spirit with so sore a burden as the dreadful alternative—that she must now renounce the hope of living under the same roof with her desolated mother, or by her maintenance add fresh expences to that unknown bounty by which her dear parent had so long been supported. She only knew that the institution of this charity belonged to the penitent betrayer of a suffering matron, torn from the arms of her family; but being unacquainted with his name, that of Sir William Jones was the very last with which her imagination would have filled up the blank.

Long did she labour with these uneasy reflections, which abated something of their corroding severity, when she made up her humble mind to take upon herself the double office of keeper and nurse to her mother, rather than live from her, even if
splen-

splendour had been the opponent of duty. —“ I shall then,” thought the sweet girl, “ be no additional clog on the bounty that supports her. I shall earn my bread by doing those offices for which another is paid :” for that other she resolved to provide before she quitted her employment, or, as it was most probable she would do, return to her own country ; and for the exigencies of this generous retribution, it was supposed, with something like joy, that she should be amply provided by the sale of such cloaths as would never more arrange either with her desires or her situation.

My readers will, doubtless, wonder what should estrange Harriet from the society, almost the sight, of her beloved Loretta two whole days ; yet their wonder must cease, when they are told, it was not only the command of her imperial Ladyship for all friendly intercourse between them to be
at

at an end, but that she also made her so constantly her companion, by day and night, as left few moments of liberty, and those the coinage of stealth, for the tender friends to weep on the bosoms of each other.

Harriet nobly offered every sacrifice, even of her filial obedience, at the altar of friendship; but Loretta, still more nobly, rejected the offering. “No! dear Miss Acres, No!” cried the generous Orphan of Snowdon. “The little temple of peace I have built with indefatigable pleasure on the ruins of magnificent happiness, would be utterly demolished by the least resistance on your part to whatever is the will of your mother. Make me not so much a wretch in my own sight as to requite the obligations I owe my beatified preserver, by seducing her beloved grand-daughter from the straight path of rectitude into the crooked one of error! I advise, I entreat
—I will

—I will set you, dearest, kind, compassionate Miss Acres, I will set you an example of submission ; for I will with strictness obey those commands you are inclined to dispute. I am not a fit companion for a lady of your rank and expectations : my ambition is to deserve, without being exalted to, the honour of your friendship.—We must have no more private interviews ; and let this be the last, dear, indulgent embrace,” casting her arms about the speechless Harriet, “ in which every thing but affection may be forgotten. The respect which ought to accompany this freedom shall, hereafter, fence round the image of your goodness in a heart, from which it never—never can be obliterated !”

- It would be endless to repeat the ardent contest which ensued between an overflowing of fond sensibility and the steady perseverance of modest diffidence ; it will be enough to say, that Loretta, who had certainly

tainly the strongest side of the argument, prevailed to establish the wavering duty of Harriet.

Just as they had vowed the sincerest and tenderest remembrance of each other, Lady Acres sent up her woman with a message, desiring the attendance of Loretta. The tears which had covered her cheeks were immediately wiped away, and with virtuous resolution, in which was comprised the dignity of innate rectitude, she went to receive her Ladyship's commands, resolved, of whatever nature they might be, not to dispute them.

Mrs. Osmond, for reasons best known to herself, had carefully concealed from her family every thing which related to the widow of Montgomery and Sir William Jones; and, at her request, Loretta had never mentioned her mother to Harriet; so that, in her way to Lady Acres' dressing-room,

room, she paused a moment, to consider whether, consistent with her pious respect for whatever she knew to be the will of her deceased benefactress, she might divulge the secret, and declare her intentions to seek an asylum in the cottage which contained her helpless parent; but, after all, could fix on no settled determination, and left it to the decision of the moment.

“How do you do?” said Lady Acres, without lifting her head from the back of a sofa on which it rested.

Loretta tried to speak, but a flood of recollection overwhelmed the powers of expression.

“I see you are properly affected. You have had, to be sure, a very great loss—and so have I! God knows when, or if ever, I shall get the better of *my* sorrows!

—I wish

—I wish your's, for your own sake, a more speedy termination. I should have sent for you before, had I been able to bear the sight of any body who is not absolutely belonging to my family. You may sit down, child, for I have much to say, if grief will allow me to perform the kind task by you, which I know would be acceptable to my dear mother, could she witness my intentions!—Oh, what a mother have I lost!”

Forgetting the presence in which she stood, thus exclaimed the impressible daughter of Montgomery—“ Lewis loses his all! —Loretta loses her all!—Affliction loses her solace!—and Charity loses her almoner!”

“ Lord, child, you will disturb my spirits more than ever—Can't you sit down, when I desire you?”

Down

Down sunk Loretta on a chair—her arms languidly fell on a table, and her face reclined upon them.

Lady Acres, who caught a glimpse of her attitude, started from her own pillow of repose, and, in an erect position, sharply required that she should withdraw her hands from the little work table, the varnish of which had already suffered, she said, too much by the carelessness of servants.

Thinking she must have acted extremely wrong, so suddenly to change the tones of lamentation to the asperity of reproof, and ever willing to blame herself rather than another, she strove to conquer the feelings that had betrayed her to commit an error, of which she was quite unconscious, begged pardon, with the sweetest humility, for her inattention; and having, by the meek sacrifice of every selfish consideration, appeased her Ladyship's careful spirit,

spirit, so deeply interested in the preservation of her table, the conversation recommenced where it had before been interrupted.

“ Do you expect to hear my mother has left you a legacy ?”

“ Oh, no ! Madam ; my dear Lady has already done too much for me.”

“ You are in the right to acknowledge *that* ; and truly it was not in her power to do more either for you or your brother than to bring you up as she has done, to exist in future by the talents she has put into your hands. How far she may have been to blame, by giving you a notion of higher circles, is not for me to determine : all that we have now to consider is, how you may decently retreat from them ; and I hope I shall have decided to your satisfaction.”

“ Teach

“ Teach me your pleasure, Madam; for I am not to learn that submission to whatever is your will becomes my duty.”

“ Perhaps I should like to retain you in my family; but there are many reasons why that cannot be done. My daughter and you, henceforth, must be strangers.— It would be mighty odd, indeed, that the young body, who from curtesy has sat at my table, and been seen in my assemblies, should mix with my upper servants, or play half-crown whist with my steward, butler, and housekeeper. There can be no other situation for you in my household, Loretta; and if I can fix you out of it in one equally eligible, I think we shall both be better satisfied.”

Loretta meekly bowed her head.—
“ Now,” thought she, “ it is time that I should mention my mother:” but Lady
Acres

Acres again began to speak, and respect kept her silent.

“ I have some friends who live in the country ; they want such an attendant as yourself about the person of their daughter, who has long been on the Queen’s list, and must succeed the next maid of honour, which by death or marriage may make a vacancy. She is a charming young woman : she will have apartments at St. James’s. You can make yourself useful, and no doubt your establishment will be mighty comfortable.”

Still Loretta said nothing. What could she say ?

“ Here is a letter,” continued her Ladyship, taking one from her pocket-book, “ which I received from my excellent mother in your childhood. You will see what have ever been her wise plans both for you and

and your brother ; all of which I am willing to accomplish, provided you can accept my good offices without aspiring to my *personal* protection : it is a liberty I could not take to burthen my husband with my mother's pensioners."

The letter her Ladyship now tendered to the trembling hands of Loretta was the very same which was written in answer to the jealous suspicions Mrs. Osmond saw was breeding in the heart of her daughter when first she opened her arms to shelter the Orphans of Snowdon, the purport of which my readers may find in the first volume.

Loretta, struggling with more than the pangs of torture, kissed and pressed to her beating bosom the well-known characters ; and then, dimly tracing them through her tears, resigned them with a graceful bend of her body to their right owner ; saying—
" Dispose

“ Dispose of me, Madam, as you please ; only if I should ever recover a lost mother, be not offended if I should place myself under her protection in preference to any other.”

“ *That*, child,” replied Lady Acres, “ is so improbable, that I shall immediately write to Lady Tillison, and shall have her answer by the time you return from the Lodge.”

“ From the Lodge!——Oh! Madam——will you, indeed, allow me to attend the remains of my revered Lady to——.”

“ Yes,” interrupted Lady Acres; “ most certainly you go, with my dear mother’s woman and my own for your companions. —I have ordered handsome mourning for you all. My coach shall convey you ; the undertaker may fill the fourth place ; and every thing will be compleated respecting

the melancholy ceremony of interment on the 25th, and you must be ready on the 20th."

Loretta lifted up her soul in thankfulness, for a permission so accordant to her reverence for the dead—so gratifying to her duty for the living; and if the extremes of pain and pleasure ever can associate together, they might certainly be said to have taken up their temporary residence in her agitated bosom, whilst considering that now she should perform the last sad offices to the best of friends, and those sweet ones of filial piety, to which her whole soul was roused by the call of nature.

Before the time fixed for the funeral procession, Loretta was summoned to one more interview. Lady Acres, who, though sighs and tears often impeded her voice, forgot not the most trivial circumstance relating to the disposition of her property, but

but honoured the poor little *protégée* of Providence with so many commissions to be executed at the Lodge, that dinner was announced before her audience ended; when, coldly wishing her a good journey, Lady Acres withdrew to the enjoyments of a splendid table, Loretta to watch and weep over the coffin of their common parent.

Our reader may have some curiosity to be intrusted with the secret orders confided to Loretta; we shall therefore have no difficulty in revealing them, under a list of the following items:

All the drawers, wardrobes, boxes, and closets, to be sealed up with the arms of their late owner—The household linen, except two things of a sort, given in charge of the housekeeper, and accounted for by her when called upon—The stores in her possession to be duly weighed and numbered—

bered—The wines, with every thing else contained in the cellars, to be counted, afterwards locked, and the keys sent to Lady Acres by Loretta—A catalogue of all the furniture to be taken by Loretta, who was repeatedly ordered to be careful that nothing might be hurt or destroyed in cleaning or packing. She was also desired to settle the servants' on board wages, till Sir John could be consulted what was to be done with them hereafter: putting all the domestics into mourning devolved on the undertaker, who had agreed to equip them proper for their *country* appearance at the rate of five pounds each, in which bargain Loretta herself had been included.

To spare her heart as much anguish as it might be spared, consistent with the task she had undertaken; and desirous to strengthen her mind for the discharge of all her duties, Loretta avoided, rather than sought, for objects of horror, and retired
to

to a distant room whilst the coffin was removing, nor took her place in the coach till her two female companions came to support her tottering steps, when walking between them, a deep black veil covering her swollen eyes from observation, she permitted them to lead her towards the carriage.

Passing Harriet's chamber, the door of which stood open, that young lady, unmindful of all restraint, rushed into the arms of the lovely mourner, crying out, as she sobbed on her neck, "Oh! Lewis, why have you left *our* Loretta without a protector!—why must the bosom of this sweet rose be pierced with thorns, which I was not allowed to extract!"

The voice of Lady Acres, from an adjacent room, calling authoritatively on her daughter, stifled in its very birth this tender interview; when Loretta, more dead
than

than alive, proceeded on her way to the carriage, into which being lifted by the solemn undertaker, she reclined her head against the shoulder of Mrs. Osmond's woman, from whence she raised it no more till the gloomy procession stopped for the night at Spenhamland.

Her travelling companions, though far from participating in the *refinements* of her sorrow, were nevertheless humanely susceptible of its consequences. With tenderness they conducted her to a bed-chamber, procured her some whey, and sat by her side till she had wept herself asleep; when joining the undertaker, who, meantime, had provided for them a plentiful repast, they partook of it with decent sobriety, in the same room where rested the corpse of Mrs. Osmond; having promised Loretta, before she would lay down, not to separate themselves from the precious remains.

The

The two succeeding days were more supportable than the first; every mile which shortened the road to Bristol added something to the composure of Montgomery's orphan, who cheered her sad thoughts with the idea that they should arrive early enough at the inn to take one look at her mother before they continued their journey; but in this hope she was disappointed: they did not arrive till very late, owing to an accident with one of the wheels, which had nearly been as fatal to her life as it proved to her fond expectations. It was quite dark; she could have no confident of course, no companion, in her call at the cottage, nor could she go thither the next morning, because this cavalcade were to be on the road by break of day.

She passed the little lane leading to her mother's abode in agonizing silence, only broken by sighs, whilst, throwing back her veil, pretending to be incommoded by its

L 4

heat,

heat, her beautiful woe-fraught eyes darted so intensely on the well beloved, well remembered path, as if to invite the trees and hedges to pity the necessity she was under of leaving them behind her :—" but I shall soon come back again," thought the sweet mourner ; when no longer able to see the dear lane, " yes, I shall soon return, to unite my fate with that of my *now* only parent !"

The day of Mrs. Osmond's interment was a day big with calamity to hundreds as well as to Loretta. The deep-toned sounds of the steeple bell were mingled with the widows' groans ! The drops heaven let fall when the motionless body of benevolence was borne to the gloomy church, were out-numbered by the tears of old men and orphan children ! Neither was Loretta the only person conveyed home in fits before the awful service was quite concluded : amongst those whose feelings

feelings were as exquisite as her own may be reckoned Mrs. Orchard and the venerable Jonathan. They were the most resigned of Christians, as well as the most faithful of servants ! They wept less for the loss of their mistress than for the deplorable state to which her death had reduced the poor Loretta ; and when they saw her sink down on the brink of the vault, their condition was almost as insensible as her own !

Lady Acres had ordered her woman to return with the undertaker as soon as the funeral should be over ; Loretta to follow in the stage, when all her commissions were executed ; and her mother's late attendant to remain behind, on board wages, with the other domestics, some of whom she seemed to hint might be received into Sir John's service, and some provided for elsewhere ; against which regulation no remonstrances could be made ; and accord-

ingly the next morning the party of mourners separated.

Mrs. Orchard and Jonathan, who loved the Orphans of Snowdon as if they claimed the honour of being their progenitors, having consoled and comforted Loretta the best in their power, offered, if she would put herself under their protection, to retire with her to any part of the country she should name, and to screen her from the shackles of dependance, by sinking their little all in an annuity on her life.

Though penetrated by their kindness, she positively refused to avail herself of its consequences. She did not plead the most forcible of her objections, that of drunkenly sucking the honey from the hive of their industry; because so fordid a consideration, to hearts generous as their's, would have given pain, without effecting its object:
she

she therefore assured them, to live under the patronage of Lady Acres, and to obey her in every thing, was a sacred duty, which (but on one consideration, that of being useful to her mother) should never be dispensed with; having reason to be convinced, from seeing a letter from under her own hand, that such *had* once been the destination of Mrs. Osmond, whose will would ever be held in such holy reverence, as to exact, in the performance of it, not only the sacrifice of her happiness, but of her life also, if that should be required.

Loretta's impatience to be at Bristol made her hasten to finish her business at the Lodge with the greatest dispatch: and thus occupied, from morning to night, she was insensibly drawn from that depth of despondency into which she plunged for several days after the interment of her benefactress.

L 6

Jonathan,

Jonathan, who was, or thought he was, an able politician, treated himself with a weekly paper, "to see," as he would say to his fellow servants, "how the world was wagging."

Twice had the walking newsmen called at the door, and dropped the St. James's Chronicle, since Loretta's arrival at the Lodge; and as often had it lain neglected, even by Jonathan, who could find no gratification in his most favourite pursuits whilst the tears of Montgomery's daughter were still flowing; but when he beheld them drying under the auspices of reason, he desired she would give him leave to entertain her with reading that paper, which contained the latest intelligence; to which request she nodded assent, without supposing she should take any other pleasure in what he proposed than that of being no impediment to his enjoyments; and, seated in his arm-chair, with his spectacles fixed
on

on his snow-bound temples, he first cast his eyes on the Gazette, crying out—"So, so, I see Government are at the old trade of *Lord* making. If they go on at this rate, Gentlemen will be *too* scarce, and Lords *too* plentiful."

Having ended his observation, he returned to the Gazette, and after reading a long list of names newly ennobled, again he suddenly stopped—smiled—took off his spectacles—wiped—replaced them—and exclaimed—"Odsso! I am glad of that!—very glad, indeed! Here is the good friend of our Lewis amongst them!"

The wandering thoughts of Loretta, roused by the name of her beloved brother, were now altogether fixed on the subject which appeared so greatly to delight the good old man, and, with something like her usual vivacity, she begged an immediate

mediate explanation of the paragraph to which he alluded.

“ Yes, sweet one ! God bless you for treating me with that lively look ! You shall have it !—you shall have every word of it ! Hear, then—‘ *Sir William Jones*, of Ferryford Castle, an English Baron, by the name, stile, and title of Lord Templevale, with remainder to the heirs of his body lawfully begotten, or failing, such to the heir of his adoption.’

Loretta, who had no conception how much Lewis would hereafter be benefited by the honours conferred on his patron, was nevertheless as much delighted with his promotion, from gratitude, as she could have been from more interested motives.

But the reason why the name of Lewis Montgomery (which would have disclosed the secret) was not included in Sir William’s

liam's patent of nobility, proceeded from the minister's having proposed, on further deliberation, that the words *heir of his adoption* should be substituted in place of an immediate successor, as being less liable to create curiosity, or give cause for the public investigation respecting any latent foundation, on which were to be raised the fortunes of so mean an individual as the obscure son of a peasant; to which Sir William had not only agreed, but made the communication to Mrs. Osmond in his last dispatches.

Every thing being now ready for Loretta's going back to the capital, nothing would satisfy Mrs. Orchard and Jonathan, but that they should hire a post-chaise at their own expence, and accompany her as far as Bristol; to which kind proposition she made no unconquerable resistance, because, confiding as much on their wisdom as on their fidelity, she resolved on opening

ing to them the true state of her mother's situation, to consult them on her favourite plan of superseding her present almost superannuated attendant, whenever she should have returned to deliver up the final of that business intrusted to her care by Lady Acres, and disposed of her wardrobe to discharge those claims, which, gratitude as well as justice made it appear, were the dues of her ancient predecessor. Therefore, with the best grace in the world, she consented to accept another obligation from the affectionate friends of her childhood, in addition to the many for which she stood already indebted; and the next day but one was fixed for the commencement of their social journey.

It was no small relief to the spirits of Loretta, which sunk at the momentary approach of that time when she should leave the dear Lodge—*never* to see it again; neither any inconsiderable augmentation to her

her little stock of hoarded hopes for the future, that, prior to their departure, Jonathan received a kind letter from Daddy Brown, as also did Mrs. Orchard from Daddy Brown's Lady, both filled with the fondest prayers for the health and welfare of the darling orphans; asking ten thousand questions about them, every one of which they desired might be punctually answered; and ended by saying, that, after the death of their relation, who could not hold it out many months, they should bid adieu to Ireland, and come back to their little farm rich enough to purchase other two farms, for Lewis and Loretta, each of which should be thrice as valuable as theirs; when they might either live at the Lodge, or in houses of their own, as their blessed protectress and honoured Lady should think proper to determine for them.

Some readers might suppose, that whilst her grief was so green, and the cause of it
so

so recent, such an apostrophe on her who was *now*, indeed, *blest*!—must have renewed the tears of Loretta; but let me inform them, that there is one way of avoiding those sudden bursts of tender passions which are apt to overtake us by surprise at the casual mention of those treasures we no longer possess; and that *one* was adopted by the daughter of Montgomery, who, instead of hoarding up in her own heart the name of Osmond, either from avarice of grief, or scarcity of fortitude, that dear, adored name, with all its train of virtues, was so familiar to the lips as well as thoughts of Loretta, that if another pronounced it, as none did so but with due reverence, it seemed like the echo of her own voice, and lightened rather than increased the pressure of her misfortunes.

She would even have summoned sufficient resolution to answer, with her own pen, the generous kindness of her absent friends;

friends ; but those who were present, fearing she might enter into gloomy details prejudicial to her reviving composure, would only consent to her adding a postscript ; in which postscript was contained more gratitude, more humility, more sound reasoning, and a great deal more genuine piety, than is sometimes to be found in a volume of female epistles.

To save the most susceptible of all hearts from as many sad impressions as good management could keep from assailing it, Jonathan and Mrs. Orchard so contrived as to have all Loretta's small parcels, unappropriated for conveyance by the waggon, placed in the chaise, at a small distance from the Lodge, and several hours before she supposed it was their intentions to set out, they insensibly betrayed her unconscious steps to the spot where stood the carriage destined to hurry her body from those

those scenes over which her reluctant soul fondly hovered. She started at a preparation so totally unexpected ; but perceiving at once the compassionate caution of her kind conductors, she tried to stifle her emotion, and with one glance, like that which Eve might be supposed to have left behind her on quitting her heavenly Paradise, was seated between her companions.—Her head fell on the bosom of Mrs. Orchard—her eyes were partially averted from the Lodge—and her pale cheeks, unmoistened with tears, spoke the language of silent woe in its most eloquent purity !

Before they had proceeded many miles, Loretta, having recovered her intelligent faculties, engaged the attention, and very much raised the wonder, of her fellow travellers, by succinctly relating to them every thing she knew concerning her mother.

“ It

“ It appears odd enough,” observed Jonathan, “ that the situation of this poor woman should have been first discovered by Sir William Jones—that he should know who forced her from Snowdon—that he should talk of his penitence—even give you to understand that she is now supported by her betrayer—yet never disclose this betrayer !”

“ What,” said Mrs. Orchard, “ what, if this Sir William should himself have been the very man ?”

“ Why, to tell you the truth, Madam,” replied Jonathan, “ I do in my heart believe it to be so. God forgive me if I misjudge him !—and God forgive him if I am right ! Whatever he might have been, he is *now* the friend of our Lewis, and, withal, the worthiest of men, as I have heard my late honoured Lady often say.”

Loretta

Loretta carelessly listened to these conjectures; and, by pretending not to adopt an idea which she called extravagant, drew them into much greater lengths on the subject than they probably intended to go; till at last their natural as well as pertinent remarks made her fear she should be of their opinion. The image raised in her mind, of her brother being under obligations to the destroyer of her mother's senses proved a poisoned dart in the bosom of confidence, and the affectionate reverence she before entertained for Sir William Jones became embittered by horrid possibilities; yet had she the command over her senses to consider it only as *possible* that he, who protected the branches, should have struck at the root of a virtuous union; and so far from encouraging the surmises of Jonathan or Mrs. Orchard, she exerted the utmost energy to confute them, and so great the power of her understanding over these good people, that whatever she advanced

vanced was with them “ wisest, discreetest, best ;” of course her opinion was established, their’s fell to the ground, and the conduct of Sir William was rescued, by his fair little advocate, from further obloquy.

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was not less with them? which, although
 not of course her opinion was still his-
 on, she is still to the ground, and the con-
 duct of Sir William was endorsed by his
 fair and advocate from her own philosophy.

END OF VOL. II.

